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SKETCHES
IN
PROSE AND VERSE

BY
F. B. DOVETON
AUTHOR OF "SNATCHES OF SONG"

London
SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON, SEARLE, & RIVINGTON
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1886

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LOAN STACK

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TO
ROBERT BROWNING, ESQ.

To thee, great singer of our later days,
Whose song is strong as sweet,
I dare to bring this slender wreath of lays,
And leave it at your feet.

A 2

PREFACE.

NEARLY all the pieces, Prose and Poetical, contained in this volume have already appeared in divers periodicals, and the source is acknowledged at foot in those cases where (having been paid) I have been kindly allowed to reprint. Among the papers contributed to may be mentioned : The *Illustrated London News*, the *Graphic*, the *World*, *Public Opinion*, *Life*, the *Girls' Own Paper*, *Society*, *Home Chimes*, *Truth*, *Fishing Gazette*, *Travel and Talk*, *Judy*, *Fun*, the *Pictorial World*, *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, *Orange Blossoms*, the *Dramatic Review*, &c., &c. The longer poems at the beginning here appear *intact* for the first time, with the exception of "Glimpses of Immortality," and "A Last Farewell."

CONTENTS.

PROSE :—

	PAGE
On the South Downs in November	1
Dartmoor in June.	5
Trouting on the Devonshire Avon	14
An Autumn Angling Tour	24
That Blessed Baby	30
A Strange Errand	34
The History of a Half-Sovereign (an Autobiography)	47
A Reminiscence	51
A Sad Strange Story	56
Fore-warned is Fore-armed	60
In Dreauland	69
Magazine Poetry ("Dark Blue")	73

Social Sketches :—

1. The Purgatory of Pleasure!	78
2. Tittle Tattle	81
3. Flirtation.	84
4. Round Men in Square Holes	87
5. The Irony of Fate	90

POEMS, DESCRIPTIVE AND SENTIMENTAL :—

Glimpses of Immortality	95
The Voices of Nature	109

POEMS, DESCRIPTIVE AND SENTIMENTAL (*continued*):—

	PAGE
In the Olden Time	127
The Rustic Beauty	165
Within and Without	189
The Last Farewell	199
Dreams—Past and Present	204
The First Discord	207
A Weird Dream	209
Near Fingle Bridge on the Teign	211
The Coaching Season	212
A Song (for Music)	212
“After”	213
A Rifleman’s Song	214
Alexander II. (In Memoriam)	214
Trance.	215
Trouting by Night	218
The Four Seasons of Life	219
The Lily	220
Castle Building	221
Autumn	221
By the Sea in November	222
Thomas Hood	224
Now and After	225
Nothing	226
Dean Stanley (In Memoriam)	227
The Angler’s Soliloquy (at the Seaside)	227
Alfred Jingle (a Sketch)	228
“And Beauty draws us with a Single Hair”	229
Song (for Music)	231

CONTENTS.

ix

POEMS, DESCRIPTIVE AND SENTIMENTAL (*continued*):—

	PAGE
Cremation—(a Plea for)	232
President Garfield (In Memoriam)	233
The Ancient Cotter	234
The Close of the Troutng Season.	235
Trout Angler's Song	236
Cypress and Orange Blossom	238
The Maiden and the Mistletoe	239
Ghosts.	240
July	241
The Angler's Dream	242
Memories of the Dead	244
Al Fresco—A Summer Memory	245
Archibald Campbell Tait (In Memoriam)	246
At the Concert in the Dome.	247
At Brighton in January	248
On the Bridge	249
After the Battle	250
To the Lady Bicyclists at the Devonshire Park	251
At Beachy Head	252
Baby's Social Duties	254
A Welcome to May	255
The Soul's Voyage	256
A Spring Idyll	258
The World without Women	259
The Sick Toiler in the Garret	261
Shall we meet them again?	262
Woodland Memories	264
A Shortest Day Scene	264

POEMS, DESCRIPTIVE AND SENTIMENTAL (*continued*):—

	PAGE
Memory and Music	265
Au Revoir	266
Life and Death	267
Only a Dream	269
On the Melting of the Snow	270
A Song for the Season	271
The Phantom Fisher	272
The Last Cast	273
Imaginings	275
On the Unveiling of the Fielding Memorial	278
Love's Haunts	280
A Boating Song	280
My Study Fire	281
At Chagford (Devon)	284
To my Infant Goddaughter	286
Christmas Bells	286
Prince Leopold (In Memoriam)	287
In the Glen	289
The Telegraph Boy (a Reminiscence)	290
The Temptation	291
Two Brighton Celebrities (In Memoriam)	292
A Country Walk in January	293
To a Mother (on a Welcome Arrival)	294
The Fatal Shaft	295
A June Song	297
The First Crocuses and Snowdrops	298
The White Lie (a Ballad)	299
A Flower Service	301

CONTENTS.

xi

POEMS, DESCRIPTIVE AND SENTIMENTAL (*continued*):—

	PAGE
Dartmoor	302
The Beauty	303
Marriage	305
The Maiden Aunt to her Niece	306
The Empress of India	307
A July Idyll.	309
A Year Ago (for Music)	310
The Devon Mystery	311
Vanitas	312
"Parva Domus—magna Quies"	313
Ethel—A Memory	314
The Witchery of Fair Women	317
Primrose and Parasite	317
In Memoriam	318
Called by the Cuckoo	320
A Song of Spring (for Music)	321
Princess Alice (In Memoriam)	322
Life's Twilight Time	324
Once Only	325
Semper Eadem	326
A Love Story	328
Lodmore (Weymouth)	329
London in 1900	330
The Wishing Well	333
The Witch and the Lady	336
At Michelham Priory	339
Traps and Torture	341
What about the Hare?	343

POEMS, DESCRIPTIVE AND SENTIMENTAL (*continued*) :—

	PAGE
Da Flores Liberis 	344
Hypnotism	344
Jumbo (In Memoriam)	345
In the Shrubbery	346
Which is it ?	348
In the Row (in the Season)	349
On my Scotch Terrier "Pepper"	351
Anti-Jingo Song	353
A Welcome	354
The Gordon Memorial	355
Don't Tell (for Music)	356
Ad pallidam Mortem	356
Torquay	358
My Courting Days are done	360
The Close of the Season (a Sonnet)	361
A Devon Idyll	362
The Lady Madeline	363
A Sequel to Poe's "Raven"	364
The Ghosts of Christmas Past	367
A June Morning	368
Gwendolen	370
"Only"	370
To Cawsand Beacon	371
The Close of the London Season	372
My Resolution	373
Ode to March	374
The Approach of Spring (to a Lady)	376
Falling Leaves	377

CONTENTS.

xiii

POEMS, DESCRIPTIVE AND SENTIMENTAL (*continued*) :—

	PAGE
Flowers of Joy and Sorrow	378
God bless him	379
An Earthly Paradise	380
The Royal Academy	381
Lidford Cascade	381
In the Autumn Time	382
To Madeline	383
On the Approach of All Fools' Day	385
Ode to April	386
A May Day at Ventnor	388
A Spring Song	389
The Abbé Liszt (In Memoriam)	391

HUMOROUS POEMS, AND PARODIES :—

New Version of a Nursery Rhyme	392
My Tailor !	393
With Apologies to Tom Moore	395
A Wife's Vagaries	396
Recipe for a 3-Volume Novel	397
To the coming Comet	398
From the Registrar-General (the Census)	399
Wanted !—A Sinecure !	400
A Visit to Mr. Page, the Butcher	402
Zoedone	402
To my Wife (after "The Princess")	404
Christmas Bills !	405
Christmas Versicles (by a Lunatic)	406
The Song of the Flirt	407

HUMOROUS POEMS, AND PARODIES (*continued*) :—

	PAGE
Young Oxford's Pranks (after Hood)	408
Brighton	410
King Theebaw (after a Bab Ballad)	413
The Lawn Tennis Match (after Hohenlinden)	414
Othello—a rhymed Version	415
St. Swithin—the very wet Season of '82	417
Bewitching Brighton	418
The Gastronomic Epoch	419
The Spots of Grease	420
"No. 50"	422
March Musings	423
Canine Sagacity	424
Revolutionizing Time	425
In the Floral Hall at Devonshire Park	426
Nursery Rhyme (New Version)	427
The Serpent of the Sea	428
Lawn Tennis	429
A Fisherman's Fancies (in December)	430
Why is it?	432
The Divided Skirt	434
A Doleful Lay	435
Emancipation	436
Some Day (a New Version)	437
The Demon Dyspepsia	438
Our Modern Children	439
Eheu! Fugaces, Postume! Postume!	440
'Tis the Grub that makes the Butter fly!	441
The Precocious Pet	443

CONTENTS.

xv

HUMOROUS POEMS, AND PARODIES (*continued*):—

	PAGE
A December Dirge	444
The State of the Thames (after Coleridge) .	445
The Burial of the Season	447
A Christmas Canticle	448
The "Silly Season"	449
Femina Victrix	450
The Unfitness of the Meat	453
A Bookish Ballad (after Hood)	454
Applied to Home Rule	456
The Bishop and the Ballet	456
The General Nuisance	458
November	461
Mandates for Mary (after Moore's Anacreontic "Wreaths for the Ministers")	462
Taking the Cake	464
My Schooldays	465
The Old Year and the New	467
A Seasonable Song	468
A Drinking Song (slightly altered)	470
Our Visitors	471
"My Whiteley!"	473
Ye Primrose Dames of England	474
The Grand Young Man (after Moore).	476
The Midnight Mission (a Legend of the West Countree!)	476
Nothing to Talk about	481
Lawn Tennis Tournament at Eastbourne, '85	483
A Voice in the Matter	485

HUMOROUS POEMS, AND PARODIES (*continued*):—

	PAGE
Dinner is a Stage.	486
A Lawn Tennis Ode	487
After being sent for !	488
Children at the Pantomime (after Southey)	490
When the Boys come Home !	491

SKETCHES IN PROSE AND VERSE.



PROSE.

ON THE SOUTH DOWNS IN NOVEMBER.

THE afternoon is warm and calm, and the mellow sunlight softens every feature in the landscape. The rounded outlines of the chalk Downs are clearly defined against the blue sky, whilst the deep hollows are lying half in sun, half in shadow. It is still early in the afternoon, but in another hour those hollows will be entirely shadowed, and one charm in the scene destroyed. At the base of the Downs are fields of golden stubble, and in the corner are ricks of pale yellow, where chaffinches, greenfinches, and sparrows are busy insect-hunting amid the straw. Ever and anon the common bunting (a solitary bird) wings his somewhat heavy flight across the fields. As I gradually ascend the slope I notice tiny black specks with some white ones among them against the rich red of a distant fallow field. They are rooks and common gulls on the look-out for their daily "Diet of Worms." Between these birds there is a sort of armed

2 SKETCHES IN PROSE AND VERSE.

neutrality; each endures the other on sufferance, as it were, but there is no open war. In my slow ascent I come across a few late plants, including the hawkweed ox-tongue, the bastard toad flax (a tiny thing, and very local), a small variety of the dandelion, wild thyme, round-headed rampion, autumnal gentian, clustered bell flower, wild mignonette, dove's foot, crane's bill, &c. Under the hedge just below me grow the basil thyme, greater knapweed, black-headed ditto, and red briony, all these preferring a sheltered situation. An indefinable sadness hovers everywhere—a sense of sure though slow decay. This golden sunshine flecking those distant woods and glorifying even that humble shed in the stubble field is plainly

“A gilded halo hovering round decay,”

like the strange smile playing across the wan, worn features, soon to be stiffened for ever in the cold grasp of death. As I gain the crest of the Downs I turn to gaze on the scene around me. The rich colouring everywhere holds the eye. The beeches in those far woods are fiery red and orange—later on, they will be clad in russet; the maples are scarlet and gold, like the glowing hues of sunset, whilst those horse chestnuts are resplendent in a livery of green and yellow.

Autumn is certainly the landscape painter, *par excellence*, after all. His tints are blended with the most exquisite skill; the hues of no two trees of the same species are precisely alike. And again, what diversity between trees of a different genus! It is this diversity in the

tints that lends the autumnal landscape its greatest charm. The green and gold array of those elms bordering the field is unlike the garb of the chestnuts, being brighter and clearer. The shade of each hue is different. On the roof of the old shed is a lichen of an orange tint, which contrasts beautifully with the soft blue of the sky and the pale yellow of the neighbouring ricks. I traverse the breezy table-land where linnets and goldfinches are twittering amid the furze, and sweep round towards the coast, crushing the local dwarf thistle (*Cnicus acaulis*), a pure chalk plant, at nearly every step; I watch the light thistle-down as it is carried here and there by the soft autumnal gale. These winged seeds are, indeed, powerful agents of reproduction; hence the abundance of the common thistle everywhere. Red-capped "spinks," as the goldfinches are called, are very fond of them, and when at work among the plants scatter the *pappi* in all directions like a cloud of feathery spray. A skylark is raining music from on high, but his song is apparently lost on the weatherbeaten old shepherd with his pastoral crook, whom I encounter on his way to join his flocks yonder on those distant slopes, where they look like white specks upon the hill-side. As I near the edge of the lofty cliffs, the sea breeze salutes my face with a delightful freshness; the salty odour is very strong to-day. Far away on the western horizon beyond Newhaven, is a low, dark bank of cloud, with the declining sun gilding its upper edge, and casting a streak of dazzling glory on the tranquil sea. This is the only golden bar on the waste of waters. Between

4 SKETCHES IN PROSE AND VERSE.

me and it, is a fair sheet of molten silver, the reflection of the fleecy clouds above, but behind me and to the eastward, the ocean is of a bluish-grey. Snowy spots are dancing on its gently heaving bosom, kittiwakes and common gulls rocking themselves on the cradle of the deep. Larger white objects are dotted about here and there—fishing-boats and skiffs—and beyond them I see the steamer from Newhaven to Dieppe swiftly crossing the watery way, and leaving a long, dark trail behind her. As I look over the cliffs a peregrine falcon sails out of her eyrie and mounts rapidly upwards on untiring wing. These birds breed in the steep chalk cliffs, where their nests are often inaccessible. Large flocks of starlings and daws also dart out, wheeling about a little way, and then returning to their vantage-ground. It is a grand, bold scene, and the air is a splendid tonic for overwrought nerves—a fine sweep of tranquil ocean, with the lofty white cliffs stretching far away in the blue distance, their reach broken ever and anon by a bay or small inlet. No signs of life save the gulls, starlings, and myself, except indeed it be a tiny animated speck, here and there, on the chalk beach far, far below. I regretfully turn homewards as the silver shimmer rapidly darkens, and the golden bar melts gradually away. As I descend towards Eastbourne, I notice a lonely hedge on my left, fired in places with scarlet hips and red briony berries. I gather a chaplet of these *en route* as a memento of my ramble, and reach the town about “the purple shut of day.”—*Life*.

DARTMOOR IN JUNE.

It is a broiling day in leafy June. Once more the Dutchman has deposited me and my *impedimenta* on the platform of the Newton Abbot Station, amid a group of stalwart porters, all of whom know me well—men with bronzed, kindly faces, and speaking the rich dialect of the “West Countree,” my bonny native land !

Year after year I come here to the scenes of my younger days, and year after year I find friend Perrott, the veteran Dartmoor guide, waiting my arrival at Moreton with a somewhat primitive trap and a pair of sinewy ponies. Time has dealt gently with the grand old fellow, though his locks are frosted now, and he is not as upright as he was in “the days of Auld Lang Syne.” Still, he carries his seventy summers well, can walk twenty miles at a pinch, and relishes a joke as keenly as ever. As he stands before me to-day, with his horny palm locked in mine and kindly interest beaming in his honest eyes, I sadly think of the time when he will no longer meet the train here, but be taking his last long rest in the quiet village churchyard on the edge of the bare wild moorland, stern and grey.

Trying to banish these sad thoughts, and with the glorious panorama of wood and water that I had just traversed on the branch line from Newton still floating before my mind’s eye, I take my seat beside my old friend, and we are soon rattling through sleepy old Moreton, now abloom with bright flowers in their prime.

6 SKETCHES IN PROSE AND VERSE.

Anon, on our right we catch a glimpse of the steep heights of Whyddon Park, heights crowned with chestnut and oak, that slope precipitously towards the silvery Teign, now hidden from our view; we pass through a broken, picturesque country, with woodlands here and there, and masses of grey Dartmoor granite lying in the rough inclosures—a somewhat rude landscape perhaps, and boggy in sundry places, but one I love full well, and ever hail with moistened eyes. Ha! there is the blue moorland once more, and dear old Chagford nestling peacefully under stern old Middledown Hill, that seems to guard the village like some grim giant of yore.

In the furze on the hill I shall find the lovely lesser dodder, with its skeins like red coral, set at intervals with clusters of tiny white flowers. In the marsh below I shall hap on the elegant bog-bean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*), with its ternate leaves, and pretty white florets tinged with pink; and not only these, but the marsh will yield the curious *Drosera* (both species) *Anagallis tenella*, &c. Presently Perrott breaks in upon my musings botanical with a cheery—

“Pretty nigh there, sir, now; and we ought to kill a pretty dish of trout in the Bovey to-morrow if the day be anything like a decent one.”

“There beant water enough in the main stream, I’m thinking,” adds the veteran. “But I do dearly love a day on the Bovey with you, sir; the zanery there be so home like, to my notion, and you do fish that strame uncommon well, to be sure!”

I modestly disown the compliment ; but the old fellow shakes his head incredulously as we rattle through the rough streets of " Chaggiford," and pull up sharply at that ancient hostelry, " The Three Crowns," all solid granite, with its old porch, and mullioned windows overlooking the churchyard and the fair Teign valley, with a sweep of grand wooded hills in the blue distance. Here I am at home, coming as I do, year after year, and find familiar faces " that look brighter when I come." The handmaid, a bright Devon lassie, is an old friend, and she and the hostess bustle cheerily about to make things snug for me. My baggage is soon tumbled out, and I am once more in that cool, quaint parlour Charles Kingsley used during his stay here. As I look round at the deep windows, with their spacious sill, the patriarchal armchair, and the roomy sofa, it seems only yesterday that I packed up my fishing gear here with a sigh, and yet it was a long year ago ! I feel deep repose of spirit, such as bonny Devon never fails to bring me, as I turn my traps out in picturesque confusion, making the parlour a facsimile of what it was twelve months since ; and after greeting the worthy postmaster and his comely spouse close by, and securing my letters, I take my wonted turn in the village before dinner—no light business in " these parts," where everybody is as hungry as a hunter ! How familiar everything and everybody seems ! The old grey tower, the clock, the tiny rillet under the churchyard walls, the reading-room, the market-house, the very dogs—all seem objects I parted from yesterday. That tiny tinkler, the rill, will once

8 *SKETCHES IN PROSE AND VERSE.*

more be my lullaby to-night, and land me, I trust, in the region of dreams, as of yore. Of course, I meet the popular village doctor, an old friend and a rare sportsman, and together we saunter to friend Perrott's domicile, in the centre of the place. The "master" is out ; but the "missis," a grand old dame, and a beauty in her time, gives me a hearty handshake, as does the only "maiden" at home, Ellen, who can tie flies with the best. One or two of the guide's sons come in, the eldest of whom is "a bad 'un to beat" with the fly-rod. In the cosy room where we stand has Perrott himself tied flies for forty years or so, and the walls are adorned with drawings of sundry monster trout, lured by the aforesaid son from the weir pool, with—tell it not in Gath—the artificial minnow ! Perrott has a small library of his own here, too, books given him by their authors (I notice a volume of my own doggrel among them) ; the old fellow is "no scholar," perhaps, but reads certain "potry" with relish, and is a wonderfully accurate observer of Nature, being well up in ferns and wild flowers. "The ladies I drive be allays asking me their names," he says ; "so I larns them whenever I can, not to appear foolish like." On the parlour walls, too, is the Perrott "coat-of-arms," grandly emblazoned, for he comes of ancient lineage, Here, then, the medico and myself overhaul the fly-sheets, and discuss angling prospects generally, till the clock, striking six, warns me that I shall be expected to do my duty with knife and fork in half an hour's time. So I return to mine inn, and presently am making fearful havoc with the lamb-chops and gooseberry-tart. Even

Annie, who is somewhat exacting in this respect, appears satisfied this evening with my prowess at table, and beams approvingly on the remnants of the chops. And then the cream. Here you get the genuine "clotted cream," with its golden rind, as you always get it in this dreamy Devon of ours, but nowhere else. None of your sickly provincial parodies of clotted cream ; they wouldn't pass muster here in the true home of this delicious dainty, which is a drug in Devon, and eaten *ad lib.* at every meal. Later on, I am blowing a "cloud" and sipping my whisky toddy, when Perrott is announced to form plans for the morrow. The old man sits on the extreme edge of his chair, out of politeness presumably, and joins me in a pipe and glass. He opines that the Bovey will be in good trim on the morrow, and if the day is a decent one reckons on a couple of dozen each. "I allus thinks," he says, whilst moistening his lips with "Old Irish," "that them Bovey feesh be rare good 'uns, and fine 'ating they be, too. I mind the time," he adds, "when you could fill your basket pretty nigh any day in that purty brook ; but there be a sight more fishermen now, and in consequence fewer feesh." I condole with my friend on this unwarrantable incursion of Zebedees, and push him the tobacco-jar, from which he loads another pipe. He is a terrible smoker, and relishes my "May Blossom" amazingly after the native tobacco, for which he has a sovereign contempt. We part about ten o'clock, as the moorland air always makes the new arrival sleepy, and I am soon in the "arms o' Porpus," in a bed like that of Mr. Roker's, "an out-and-outer to

sleep in." On the morrow morn betimes I am again beside my veteran guide, threading the rough and steep lanes in a rather rickety trap, with a veritable shrimp for a Jehu, whose Devonshire accent is of the strongest. As we bowl along I notice *Teesdalia nudicaulis* amid the interstices of the granite walls, and the lovely little *Corydalis claviculata*, with its tangled stems and yellowish-white flowers, peeps out on us from the hedges here and there. It is too early for the exquisite *Campanula hederacea*, with its tiny azure bells; but a month later it will festoon many a granite wall, under which some clear rillet runs by the roadside. Up hill and down hill, now skirting some steep fir plantation, and now passing fields abloom with waving coloured grasses, campions, and blue hyacinths; now rattling through quiet hamlets, with solid granite farmhouses, and now crossing crystal-brooks that lose themselves among brambles and rose bushes, we, at length, halt at North Bovey, a quiet, quaint village, whose tall grey tower is a landmark for miles around. We put up at a cosy little inn, adjust our fly-rods, and make for the trout stream in the valley below. On the way I notice *Ranunculus parviflorus*—an uncommon plant rather—in the hedge, and stop to pop a bit into my collecting-box, Perrott looking on with a judicial eye as he examines the new "find" carefully. We find the brook in rare trim—the water slightly coloured, and the trout rising in that quiet way which shows they mean business; the day is also a favourable one—cloudy, with a S.W. wind, and there is not too much fly on. I walk down stream a mile or so,

turning round at all the likely bends and stickles to fish them up. To-day there is a splendid ripple on, and I pull out one fish after another, all as bright as virgin gold, till their weight begins to tell. I use a blue grizzle for the stretcher, and a red palmer, ribbed with gold twist, for "Bob," both standard flies for the bonny Bovey. If Master Trout turns up his nose at these now, either he is off his feed or gorged with the Fern Webb or Bracken Clock, that tiny-winged beetle which is so deadly in June. But its use smacks strongly of poaching in my eyes, and I stick to my colours, red and blue. The first half-mile or so is over a common ablaze with gorse, after which the river gradually becomes more wooded as it approaches the gorge under Lustleigh Cleave. It is, without doubt, a queer stream to tackle; you must have the knack of throwing back-handers under the bushes into little holes the size of a slop-basin if you would pick out the show fish. The tyro will not do much here, and will probably leave something like a guinea's worth of tackle behind him. Each bend of the brooklet seems lovelier than the last, and as I ramble on, I think of the lines—

"The dreary moor towards the west—
Steep fields upon the other side—
Down stream the vision I love best
'The Cleave,' in all its barren pride,
And in the foreground, mead and wold,
Starred with rich pink, and blue, and gold."

That conveys as accurate an idea of the scenery we are traversing to-day as it is possible to give in words, I

think. Anon, Perrott comes up to me, and, in reply to my query as to his sport, wags his head sententiously, and mutters something about it "being no bit of good at all." However, I find he has caught more than I have after all. This innocent distortion of the truth as regards his "catch" is a pardonable weakness of the veteran's, for he loves nothing better than to get a harmless rise out of you. We eat our sandwiches and produce our "pocket pistols," after which we smoke placidly in leafy nooks, and recall our past exploits on the lovely stream. Grey evening steals on apace, and we regain the inn with a few more than the prophesied four dozen fish between us. Then the drive through the gloaming, with the lonely Tors growing fainter in the far distance. Then some of Perrott's quaint stories, as he quietly sucks at his black briar-root pipe in calm enjoyment. Presently a sheep-dog leaps over a gate and menaces our stately equipage. The old man opines that the said dog wants "catechizing" (meaning chastizing, I presume). At last "mine hostelrie" is reached, and what a flavour the lamb-chops have after a day by the riverside! Again, in dreams that night, do I catch my trout over again, with a phantom fly-rod in a shadowy stream, with old Perrott as the central figure. Another day we follow the North Teign, nearly as far up as its source above "Teign Head," through the wildest scenery imaginable. Dreary moorlands stretch away here as far as the eye can reach; grim, gaunt Tors, with their rugged grandeur, softened by the mellow summer sunlight, stand like giant sentinels over that lonely land.

About half a mile below Teign Head the river races down over immense slabs of granite, and there are some most tempting pools, where you may pick out veritable beauties. We basket about three dozen apiece here, and, better still, we find the beautiful Lancashire asphodel, the marsh St. John's wort, *Scirpus setaceus*, that lovely miniature rush, the bog pimpernel, and other interesting plants. The stone curlew wheels, with its wild wail, overhead, and we see a pair of ring-ousels, who breed here.

The merlin is occasionally seen on Dartmoor ; but the marsh harrier is a *rara avis* indeed, and the kite has totally disappeared. The great bustard was once seen on the banks of Cherry Brook, near Princetown, about twenty years ago, by a relative of the writer, who, at first, took it for a turkey.

Perrott and I devote several days to botany, and pass some pleasant hours plunging about bogs, or investigating the treasures of wild remote lanes and heathery commons. The famous guide is an enthusiast in this line, and his sunburnt face glowed with pleasure on gathering one day an armful of the pretty snakeweed (a local plant) near Manaton. Among our "finds" were *Potentilla argentea* and *Cherophyllum Anthriscus* (near Trusham), *Myrrhis odorata*, *Verbascum blattaria*, *Enanthe Pimpinelloides* (near Trusham), *Thlaspi arvense*, &c.

Very rarely, in these excursions, we came upon fair ladies in summer guise (often the nearest rector's daughters probably), in some retired, picturesque spot,

where one least expected them. Feminine faces never look so charming as when glimpsed only through a leafy screen in the heart of the country—their beauty is heightened by the lovely surroundings.

Another day we fished in the romantic gorge towards Fingle, where the trout are larger (averaging about five to the pound), and the scenery simply exquisite. Then we had a day for antiquities, when Perrott waxed eloquent over hut-circles, cromlechs, British camps, stone avenues, &c., for he is a bit of an antiquarian as well as a naturalist.

Three happy weeks in this "Lotus-land"—three weeks of golden sunshine, green nooks, and rippling waters—and then a warm parting with my worthy friend—a sad good-bye for awhile to the bonny "West Countree," and the iron steed is swiftly whirling me towards Eastbourne and home.

TROUTING ON THE DEVONSHIRE AVON.

THIS once-famed river rises high upon dreary Dartmoor, amid the rushy haunts of snipe and plover, and dances merrily through that barren waste, flowing under the romantic Shipley Bridge, two or three miles above Brent, and thence larking through Avonwick, Loddiswell, and Aveton Gifford, where it enters the estuary to fall into the sea at Avonmouth. None of your staid, solemn streams, with rushy margins and unwrinkled face, is this bonny Avon of ours, but a dashing, dare-devil, cheery sort of a

river that bounds over the crags of Devonian slate with surprising velocity, and, like a prattling child, its babble is only hushed when its voice is lulled to rest by the dreamy lullaby of its stately mother, the sounding sea. It was in the "good old times" one of the most productive of trout streams, was this Avon, and your basket was oftener full than not of the speckled beauties, after a day's fly fishing. Nowadays it is so terribly poached by idle vagabonds that it is by no means an easy matter to get a decent dish of fish, except when the water is clearing after a flood, when heavy trout are occasionally taken. A vast number of salmon are also taken out of this stream annually by the said poaching gentry, the few water-bailiffs employed being utterly unable to cope with the gangs of robbers who have spoilt one of the best rivers in England !

Certain veteran trout-fishers wink at all this, being convinced that S. Salar gobbles up his speckled brother whenever he can ; but expediency is one thing and legality another, and I firmly express my conviction that the fact of salmon preying upon trout (even were it fully proved) should be no justification in the eyes of true trout-fishers for the wholesale destroyers of the said salmon, even allowing that their proceedings favoured the increase of trout. In our unlucky Avon there is little doubt that the trout as well as the salmon are speared and netted. So the poachers have not even that very lame leg to stand upon. Were I in the Commission of the Peace, which, luckily for the scoundrels, I am not, I should certainly deal very severely with them,

The salmon licence for the Avon is only a guinea, and by clubbing together, these men, with the good wages they earn; could easily provide one in every half-dozen of their number with a licence and tackle, and thus they would keep the law and have their salmon as well, whereas they now do openly what I dare not do with impunity. Nothing, I repeat, can justify this wholesale infraction of the law, and it is to be deeply regretted that this poaching should have made so much headway that it now seems impossible to put it down. The reader will pardon this digression, but it is surely not entirely irrelevant to the subject in hand, and I fancy all true sportsmen will share my views.

Let the reader now come with me on some May morning, with a westerly wind and a cloudy sky, to bonny Avon-side, on trouting cares intent. My trusty fly rod is soon put together, and the tapering collar attached, with an Avon or Maxwell blue for stretcher, and a red palmer (always safe here) for a dropper. A second drop may be added, and nothing beats a grizzly palmer ribbed with gold twist. We will begin in this deep pool, just under the romantic village of Diptford, whose picturesque rectory and church are perched on the heights above. A likely-looking pool is this, with a good fall at the upper end, whence comes down a rush of claret-coloured water, which swirls away into a long, still reach below. Many a handsome fish have I pulled out here, and this particular morning increases my faith in it, for at the very first cast across and up the pool there is a sudden tightening of the line, a golden gleam through

the claret water, and the next moment a handsome quarter-pounder is a candidate for the rushy repose of my basket. Two more are landed before the resources of the pool are exhausted, and then we stroll slowly down stream (leaving the still reach, which is not promising), with the west wind fanning our brows, and rich sylvan music delighting our eager ears. The graceful larches which fringe the stream a little way below have already donned their feathery foliage of the freshest green, the oak and ash are rapidly bursting into leaf in the Rectory woods, whilst the beautiful sycamore and sober alder are also in their gala dress this pleasant May morning.

After crossing a couple of meadows, veritable cloths of gold, we reach a longer one, through which the river rushes rapidly between narrow, rocky boundaries, and here we basket a trout or two more, all as golden as the buttercups under our feet. The March brown is out and hovering lightly over the water, but the trout do not seem to be feeding greedily upon them, seemingly preferring the black gnats and the iron-blue duns which are frisking merrily in all directions. So I stick to my colours, red and blue, and leave the March browns reposing in my fly-book. At the end of the last field we cross a wooden hand-bridge, erroneously called a clam by the villagers, and, turning sharply to the right, we enter a miller's yard; for here is a picturesque old mill, whose leat is taken out of the Avon a quarter of a mile above—a weather-beaten, romantic old mill, whose clatter (as George Eliot puts it in "The Mill on the Floss")

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has become part of the pervading silence, and is hardly heard by the ears upon which it falls so often. The hoary old miller, whose father and grandfather lived here before him, hobbles out of his rose-wreathed cottage as we pass, and wishes us "good sport," but opines "that it is rather too cloudy to do much!" With one glance at *Semper vivum Tectorum* glowing on the roof, and another at the tiny garden already gay with flowers, we briskly trudge on through the yard, and emerge on a lovely glen, with the merry river racing swiftly below. Rocky steepes crowned with gorse, and dwarf oaks rapidly bursting into leaf, rise on our left, whilst equally steep woodlands face us across the stream. The glen itself is literally paved with the blue hyacinths, interspersed here and there with a few late daffodils, for a fortnight ago these latter flowers made a golden carpet for this secluded valley. Nature, like a lovely coquette, soon wearying of her golden robe, flings an azure one instead over her fair shoulders. A water-ousel or dipper occupies the summit of an old grey boulder opposite us, his ruddy breast glancing in the sunlight, and his saucy tail flirting incessantly as he watches us curiously. But at the first whisk of our collar and flies he darts off up the stream, following its windings till he is lost to view. Steady!

A good trout was lost there through carelessness on our part. We felt the vibration through the line, as we were watching the bird, but with one dash the speckled beauty was off! Being now more on our mettle, we fish down this rapid reach with keen eyes

enough (the water is heavy enough for down and across fishing to-day), and for our guerdon basket a brace of plump quarter-pounders before we reach the pool at the end of the glen. This is an old battlefield of ours, where we have won many watery victories, and lost a few, and at the second throw to-day our red palmer is fast in a half-pounder, which at last gleams through the meshes of our net. This makes four brace so far, all plump, golden fellows, averaging about 4 oz. each. The half-pounder is a very Goliath among them, and sensibly increases the weight at my back.

Crossing a sloping meadow, at whose further end is a knoll, abloom with red campions and blue hyacinths, we enter a little wood, that slopes down abruptly to the river's edge. As we make our way along the narrow path close to the stream, a couple of common snakes glide through the undergrowth just in front of us. The middle willow-wren and chiff-chaff serenade us from the woods above, and the sweet cuckoo's note floats towards us on the breeze. Blue-bells galore, and the white garlic beautify the narrow footway, whilst the elegant weasel-snout in its bright orange livery, is seen a little further on in the woods.

In July it is hard work to push through the dense foliage that overhangs this bye-path, with fly-rod in hand, but now we can get along fairly well. Through an opening in the trees a short way on we try a cast, and with some little difficulty land a six-ounce trout, which took the blue upright close under the bank on

the further side. We never fish without a short landing-net. Be it here observed the hoop is reversible and when not in use hangs over the left shoulder, the handle being too short to interfere with throwing the fly. Many a red-spotted beauty has this net saved to us, especially when fishing the moor streams from rocks in mid-water. Our trusty friend is over our shoulder as we trudge along the romantic path, which soon ends, as does the wood, at a rough stone wall. Climbing over this obstacle, we find ourselves in an open meadow. In this field we have gathered the honey plantain—a rare plant with us, with a pale purple spike. To-day we recognized the sweet cuckoo flower, the knautia, the modest self-heal (*Prunella vulgaris*), the white campion, the early orchis, *cum multis aliis*. By the river gleams the fiery marsh marigold, with its heart-shaped leaves, and in a month or two the lovely purple loosestrife will stand like a stately sentinel on bonny Avon's banks.

The river here is densely wooded—alder, sycamore, blackthorn, and ash being the prevailing trees. On the opposite side is an embankment, the remains of a projected railway from Brent to Kingsbridge, and immense slatestones are piled up on the river's brink. One can only get the fly in occasionally, but there are some rare stickles here, where the water swirls away rapidly under the overhanging alders, and some likely pools with a considerable fall above them. By scrambling through the brambles and blackthorns, I get near enough the stream to whip it downwards—

no easy task—and away float my red and blue flies into that rapid current under the massive-foliaged alders. I lose sight of the flies, but a heavy splash and a sharp tug tell their own tale, and the next minute the trusty lancewood bends amain to its work. Another half-pounder is fast to the victorious red palmer, and after some dodging amongst the rushes and marigolds, he is swept into my net—a splendid trout, all crimson and gold. It is now two o'clock, so I perch myself on a convenient crag, and discuss my biscuits and sandwiches, not forgetting to drink the health of bonny Avon and its merry inmates in a flask of Rhenish wine, for hock is my favourite fishing beverage. Then comes the postprandial pipe, a clay, or perhaps a staunch briar-root, and as the smoke-wreaths ascend amid the alders, I indulge in a brief reverie. The greenery overhead with glimpses of blue sky through the tracery of the boughs, the ripple of the restless river, the song of birds, and the scent of blossoms, all combine to form my paradise, and I smoke on, in a delicious dream. Shadowy visions of bright feminine faces whose melting eyes would never more meet mine on earth mingle strangely with old piscatorial reminiscences of tussles with burly trout in lovely scenes of wood and water, with the lonely cushat cooing success to me from his leafy home. These memories merge again into sadder and stranger ones, till the splash of a water vole under my feet brings me back to complete consciousness. There are two or three more fields before we reach Beckham Bridge, about a mile and a quarter below

Diptford, but one can only throw here and there for some distance, as the stream is so wooded. As I trudge through the fields, lofty slopes of arable, gorse, and meadow-land crown the view on my left, whilst below Beckham Bridge steep woods descend to the Avon's banks, ever and anon opening into exquisite glades garnished with flowers innumerable. The fishing is fairly good, though difficult in places on account of the wood, from Beckham Bridge down to Gara Bridge (about one mile and a half down), and here the fishing gets better still, and the trout larger, till Topsham Bridge (about a mile and a half below) is reached, but I have never fished so far down as this last, so can only speak from hearsay. Heavy salmon are, I believe, often taken with the fly at Loddiswell (about six miles below Diptford) early in the season.

To return to our ramble, I do very little till I reach a largish pool (where the water swirls strongly to the left) just above Beckham Bridge, but here another brace of quarter-pounders fall victims to the charms of the blue upright, whilst I lose another much larger fish, which on the principle of "*Omne ignotum pro magnifico*," I modestly estimate at at least three-quarters of a pound. One glimpse only do I get of his golden belly, as he dashes at the palmer, and then—I am left lamenting! The day is made for fly-fishing, with a light, westerly wind and a cloudy sky, and in the stickle below the bridge I hook the hero of the day. The palmer is again the deadly lure, and he fights fiercely, bending the rod nearly double; but I give and take discreetly, till at length

“He gleams—the fight fair foughten—
Through the meshes of my net !”

A pounder at last, and a doughty fish for our Avon, where the trout at this part scarcely average four ounces. What a picture he makes, swathed with rushes in my weather-beaten creel, which is decidedly becoming a burden to bear ! But it is a labour of love to bear this burden, so, leaving the river where the aforesaid embankment crosses it, I walk along a stony lane that follows the bend of the stream for about a quarter of a mile. The wood prevents fishing here, so I stroll along leisurely, now meeting a comely rustic lass, with whom I exchange greetings, and now a group of ruddy-cheeked children, intent on gathering blue-bells and marigolds, of which they have a brave show. Coming anon to a small farm, I leave the lane, and passing through the yard leap over a stone wall into a large meadow. Here I join the river again, and here, too, is a famous pool, where I mean to wind up. However, I do nothing in it to-day beyond taking a little fellow under three ounces, which I return to his nursery. It is getting late, and the fish are not feeding nearly so well, so I reluctantly pack up my *impedimenta*, and wind the cast round my hat. I have been fortunate to-day, only losing two flies since I began fishing, and my bag has been a good one, just a baker's dozen, comprising one-pounder, two half-pounders, and ten plump fellows averaging a quarter of a pound apiece. The farmer is milking a cow as I turn to leave. He is of a serious turn of mind, though affable enough, and as he proffers me a can of warm, sweet milk he anxiously

24 SKETCHES IN PROSE AND VERSE.

inquires as to the present condition of Ireland, opining that "the riots there are all the fault of them praisteses." I give him my views on the subject on returning him the can and a brace of trout, and after exchanging a cordial good-night, stroll homewards through the deepening twilight with a heart I hope at peace with all mankind, and full of thankfulness to the Creator for this happy day by bonny Avon-side.—*Bell's Life*.

AN AUTUMN ANGLING TOUR.

LET me turn over a few leaves of my note-book, hoping my reminiscences may interest my readers. Where to go for a bridal tour is a problem that has often sorely exercised the happy and newly-fledged benedict, whose purse does not happen to be a particularly ample one. This was a problem that presented itself to the present writer for solution one September, and after a little deliberation, we determined to go to Axminster, the windings of whose beautiful river Axe caught my piscatorial eye from the windows of the carriages on the London and South-Western Railway.

At the close of a lovely day early in September, we found ourselves at the hospitable doors of the "George," the most comfortable hostelry in the ancient town. There was a buxom old Devonshire lady in charge here, whose special mission in this earth of ours, seemed to be making out long bills, in the perusal of which you

were so long in getting to the bottom, that you grew tired at last, and swallowed the grand total with as much grace as you could command. We were well cared for at the "George," revelling in the inevitable Devonshire cream, prawns, &c., but we soon shifted our quarters to furnished lodgings hard by, within two minutes' walk of the railway station. For reasons best known to ourselves, the fishing was postponed from day to day, and instead of our dropping the trout a line, the only lines we knew were those dropped at our door by the postman. At length, with a fearful effort, one lovely afternoon, I plunged wildly into a huge pair of fishing-boots, and after tying what I thought a suitable cast, trundled down to the river with my wife in a dogcart. A couple of miles' spin along a good road brought us to a bridge, where we began operations. The Axe at this part is not particularly beautiful, the scenery being much finer higher up; but still there is always a charm about a river that winds in and out amid fertile pastures, backed by wooded hills. Here a stickle, and such a lovely one; and there a lovely reach of likely water, known among anglers as Dub. Here a little waterfall, at the bottom of which you might reckon on a trout, and there a run which would bring an angler's heart into his mouth! However, though I did all I knew, and whipped the unoffending stream in my most artistic manner, I could not lure a trout to the surface, and was about giving up in despair, when lo! a sudden splash, and a plump quarter-pounder was suddenly whisked over my wife's head, who, having never seen a trout

caught before, might be pardoned for giving a little start of surprise. However, the fish was soon basketed, and as no more would come, we put up the rod and spun back to the ancient town in the darkening twilight, rather disappointed with my first evening on the Axe.

Fate, however, was kinder subsequently, and we had several pleasant days on the lovely river. Taking the 11.48 up train from Axminster, we would get out at Chard Junction, about three miles distant, and striking the river close to the station, fish down nearly as far as Axe Bridge, about two miles from Axminster. The distance from the Chard Junction Station to Axminster by the river—its path being so winding—is, I should say, at least a mile and a half greater than the route by the line. These were indeed halcyon days, sauntering lazily on by the placid stream in the lovely autumn weather, choosing some delicious little nook close to the stream to discuss our wine and sandwiches in, and rapidly con a volume of poetry or a newspaper! We knew these nooks by heart at last, always choosing the same one, and from our retreat we could hear the plash of the trout as they sucked in the unfortunate flies. The river was in perfect order, but the trout were very shy, never coming a second time; they were, however, fine plump fellows, averaging about 5 oz. or 6 oz. and game to the last, though the odds were 10 to 1 against my landing them on account of the weeds, which abound in this river. Every time a trout was hooked he bolted upstream, head foremost into a bank of weeds, when all was over immediately! I lost many fish from this cause

at first, but I was up to their dodges at last, and let them run down-stream instead, when they cut clean through the weeds and were generally basketed in the end.

The river is a charming trout-stream, deep still reaches, where you must throw gingerly indeed, alternating with tempting stickle, at the tails of which you were sure of a rise at any rate. Nothing can exceed the beauty of the windings of the Axe in this locality, every fresh turn disclosing some new charm in the landscape, which is of a pastoral character, and rich in historic associations; the stream is tolerably open, but you often hitch your flies in the opposite bushes, or in some sunken pile. I had one or two severe struggles to recover my lost tackle, in one instance having to partially disrobe and ford the river, to the intense astonishment of the cows. I cannot say that my bags on the Axe were heavy, but I brought some pretty fish to bank. My best day was four brace, including one $\frac{3}{4}$ lb., and two very nearly $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. each, taken with a small yellow dun and the red palmer. I don't think this was bad for the time of the year. In April and May, heavy bags might be made I should fancy. The expense was nominal, my ticket for a fortnight only costing me five shillings. I may add that the little Yarty, a tributary of the Axe, abounds with good trout and peal, but it is strictly preserved by the several proprietors, from whom, however, I should fancy a day's fly-fishing might be always obtained. The minnow (natural or artificial) and the worm are prohibited both in the Axe and the Yarty, consequently the fish run

pretty large, a great consideration in my opinion. I believe there is good peal-fishing in the Axe, below Axminster, but I heard that the water was a good deal netted. When my ticket expired, we determined to fly to "fresh fields and pastures new." So on the 20th September, we bid adieu to our old haunts with regret, and started for dear Chagford, associated with my earliest memories, when I was yet a tyro in the noble art.

Past Honiton, with its lovely surroundings, past Sidmouth Junction, Broad Clyst, and Pinhoe, till we once more rattled into the Queen-street Station at Exeter, which presented a scene of unwonted bustle after the quiet and repose of Axminster, onward we flew like lightning along the banks of the placid Exe, till at length we sniffed the salted air once more, and sped along the marge of the tranquil sea, with distant snowy sails like sea-birds resting peacefully on its bosom; a minute's halt at Little Dawlish, with its ornamental water, a short glimpse of Teignmouth, and we brought up at Newton Abbott, when we changed carriages for Moreton, from which town to Chagford we posted it in one of guide Perrott's best carriages, with a pair of hardy horses to boot. I may note *en passant* that the scenery on the line from Newton to Moreton, especially near Lustleigh Cleave, is exceeding beautiful, and quite mocks my humble powers of description. From the carriage windows you see a lovely land, a land of plenty and peace, exquisitely wooded, and very broken. Hill and dale in endless variety, charming dells watered by crystal brooks, fine old woods whose glades you long to

explore, and above all the grand Tors of dear old Dartmoor in the distance, the whole forming a picture, which once seen, "becomes a part of sight." We reached Chagford just before dark, and put up at the Moor Park Hotel, which is delightfully situated, and where the angler will find every comfort. We just came in for the tail of the autumn fishing here, the licence on the Dartmoor streams expiring on the 30th September.

I cannot dwell long on our fortnight-sojourn in Chagford. I could cover sheets with pleasant reminiscences of our happy days on the rocky Teign, where I once lost my wife, and had worked myself up to a terrible pitch of anxiety by the time she turned up again. She had fallen asleep on a rock near the Logan Stone. Nor will space allow me to dilate on our days on the dreary moorland, by Cherry Brook, and the two Darts, where I made some very decent bags for the time of year. The weather was like June, and my wife was my constant companion. We had one day with the carp in a picturesque mere, called Bradmere Pool, but did nothing. In guide Perrott, who always accompanied us, we found an inexhaustible source of merriment, his many droll stories and original sayings keeping us in a continual roar. Did space permit it, I could dilate on the merits of the village bully, of whom as a proficient in the art of blasphemy, Perrott was justly proud. I could also descant on some wonderful "Penny Readings," in which the excellent and honoured rector took part; where young Chagford applauded lustily in the wrong place, and one reader—a mechanic—yelled like a Red Indian,

but space forbids, and this paper, like our tour, must come to an end.

I may add that I scored altogether at Chagford about ninety trout, in seven or eight excursions. My best day was twenty on the Taw, and the killing flies were the yellow duns, red and blue uprights, and red palmers. Many of the fish were of fair size for moorland trout, but, of course, not comparable in this respect to the Axe fish.

THAT BLESSED BABY!

WE were travelling to Reading, Jones and I, on a fine afternoon in September, in the year 18—. I was independent of a profession, and my friend was a barrister whose "briefs" occurred at long intervals. We had started from Exeter that morning *en route* to Reading, where we were to spend a week or so in exploring the beauties of the neighbourhood. As we neared Swindon Junction, Jones, who had been taking "forty winks," suddenly roused himself, and said,—

"Frank, old boy, I am peckish, and mean to make the most of the ten minutes so generously allowed us.—What a shame it is the provender should be so bad at the stations in this enlightened age of ours! Are you for a plate of watery soup and a glass of brandied sherry, Frank?"

"Yes, I suppose so," I sighed, thinking of the excellent viands I had consumed on French railways in

my time. "A veal patty, though as heavy as a bullet, is preferable to starvation, and I am really famished."

At this instant we rattled into the Junction, where there was the usual animated scene. Women rushing wildly in all directions, and cannoning against trucks to the immense disgust of the busy porters, babies crying, men gesticulating, piles of luggage being tumbled out, and larger piles being tumbled in, the engine shrieking even louder than the babies, and "only ten minutes allowed."

We gulped down a plate of the aforesaid watery soup, hurriedly devoured some fossil buns, and again took our seats. The whistle soon screamed shrilly, and the iron horse again slowly moved off with prodigious shrieks and snorts. For an instant only we saw a woman's form at our window—a dark bundle flew through it, and lo! a bouncing baby of some six months or so was dexterously deposited on my lap! We both uttered a cry of horror; but it was too late, the woman had vanished, and the train was well under way! Our first thought was to break the communication-glass and stop the train, but we at once abandoned that idea. It would be too absurd stopping a whole train because an animated bundle had been shot into my lap! Jones, the monster, actually proposed to gag it, and fling it out of window! "But," suggested I, nervously, "it would assuredly be killed by the fall, and infanticide is an ugly word, my boy, especially as it would doubtless be brought home to us in the end!"

"Strangle it first, then," said this fiend in human

shape ; "and then pitch it out ! Ten to one they will think it strayed on to the line, and was run over by a passing train !"

I smiled a ghastly smile, and said compassionately, "Babies of six months old don't usually stray much, do they ? Besides, how about marks of violence on the throat ?"

"True," groaned Jones, "I forgot that ;" and sank back helpless in his seat.

All this time that dreadful baby was squalling piteously, and nearly drowning our voices with its dulcet tones. Its ugly phiz was as red as a beetroot with passion, I suppose, at the trick which had been played on it, and fearing it might really burst in its frenzy, I raised it gingerly so that it might rest against my shoulder. There it was, this fearful legacy, dressed in a longish robe of blue, with a queer-looking cap on its head, tied securely under its chin. It was an awful predicament truly, and I fear we both launched terrible anathemas on its unlucky head. As for its sex we were quite at sea, there being no characteristic of any kind to determine this point—and all the time the creature was sucking the knob of my stick in its lucid intervals, once viciously snapping at Jones' fingers when he advanced them too near. "It could have no teeth," I said, and that seemed to console Jones.

But at length Didcot Junction was reached—here the train only stopped a minute or two, being late, and we did not dare get out. Reading was our destination, and by-and-by we rolled into its imposing station. The

thought of what we suffered there freezes my blood even now. How I was forced to carry that hateful baby along the platform amid the jeers of the unfeeling passengers. How the porters sniggled behind our backs, and how pretty girls tittered provokingly. How I generously offered it to any one who would give it a home and a cradle, and how promptly my offer was declined by the wretches who made me their butt ! How every policeman courteously but firmly avoided me, and how finally we and the baby were whirled away in a cab amid senseless bursts of laughter on all sides ! All this I remember, and with what infinite relief we at length reached our quiet lodgings, when we consigned our charge to the care of our elderly landlady, to her intense astonishment. We were both known to her, so she at once believed our tale, and expressed her decided opinion "that it was done for a lark." However, she readily took charge of our *bête-noir*, and 'did the needful for it in every way. She was a good motherly soul—a widow—who had had chicks of her own, and so yearned towards the helpless little thing.

After about a week had elapsed, on our return home one evening, we were told the baby was gone ! Our landlady said an odd-looking but rather lady-like woman had called for her child, and being very like that child, our old friend, after some parleying, had handed it over to her. The mother confessed to having palmed it off on us by way of a joke at Swindon, but remorse soon drove her in pursuit of her offspring, whose whereabouts she had eventually traced. It transpired later that the

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34 *SKETCHES IN PROSE AND VERSE.*

unfortunate woman having been deserted by her husband, was subject to fits of insanity, and would wander about with her child in her arms, as though seeking her cruel spouse. It was evident that in one of these insane fits, she had been impelled by some uncontrollable impulse to throw her baby into our carriage, to seek it again when in her proper mind. We never heard of mother or child again, but to the day of our death Jones and I will never forget our adventure with "That blessed Baby!"

A STRANGE ERRAND.

I WAS in love with Estella. There was no doubt at all about that, and she reciprocated my ardent affection. We had played together as children, and had ripened towards maturity side by side. We read from the same pages beneath the cool green shade of the beeches in the sultry summer-time; our young voices echoed together in song; we wandered through the quiet forest aisles linked arm in arm; in short, our two young natures seemed imperceptibly to blend into one, and like twin flowers springing from the same parent stem, we seemed unable to exist apart. At seventeen Estella was tall and gloriously fair, with eyes of liquid blue, and a wealth of golden hair, that reached to her knee. And not only had Nature lavished beauty of form and feature on Estella, but her mind was richly cultivated. Can it be wondered at that I, then a romantic youth of eighteen,

should have long since loved this beautiful girl with all the ardour of a strangely sympathetic nature? But our dream of love, with all its joys, was soon to be rudely dispelled! My father was a poor artist, while Estella's was a rich merchant of Liverpool, who was determined that his only child *should make une grande alliance*; our fathers had been playmates at the same school, had contracted a firm friendship at the same college, and had finally settled down in the same city to pass the evening of their days. Notwithstanding the different measure of success that each had met with in life—my father deeming himself fortunate to get ten guineas for a picture occasionally, and her father spending as much on a bracelet for his darling—despite this, the old friendship lasted still, and their children were naturally thrown together a great deal.

Like Estella, I was an only child, and idolized by my parents, who gratified my every whim, and especially looked with favour on my attachment to Estella, who had long since learnt to entwine herself round their hearts. But her father, as already stated, had long secretly destined his child for a wealthy and titled suitor, and when Sir Arthur Carlyon formally presented himself in that capacity, his proposals were met with evident approval.

The shock was terrible—we had been allowed, through mistaken kindness on the part of Estella's parents, to wander on to the very brink of the precipice, totally unconscious of the terrible fall awaiting us. And now it came. My darling was overwhelmed with grief, and on

her knees, implored her father not to insist on her betrothal to Sir Arthur, when she could not give him her heart. But all in vain. Her parents, but too ready to gratify their child's slightest wish on every other occasion, were inexorable here, and trusted to time to heal the wound in their daughter's heart.

I suppose they thought then, blind as they were, that the union would eventually prove a happy one for Estella, and that the early playmate would soon be forgotten amid the whirl of the fashionable world.

My own parents also felt the blow keenly, for my sorrow was their own, and they had never for one moment suspected the designs of Estella's parents, so well had the merchant preserved his secret. She had only met Sir Arthur once—at a picnic given by his mother—when he, fascinated by her beauty, instantly determined to ask her hand. I was not at the picnic of course, and in our sylvan stroll on the following day, Estella had laughingly told me of the young patrician's evident admiration for her, and feigning for the nonce to be coquettish, had teased me in her own sweet way by descanting on his many charms, and by pretending to be deeply enamoured of him. But I was not alarmed—the soft pressure of the hand—the loving kiss impressed on my eager lips—the soft love-light shining in her deep-blue eyes, all told me that her *heart* was still irrevocably mine. And this was the end! From the day that Sir Arthur presented himself at the home of Estella my visits there were strictly forbidden; and so well was Estella guarded, that all stolen trysts, or even

occasional billets-doux were out of the question. Thus, two young hearts, ruthlessly torn asunder, were condemned to endure their agony in silence. We were allowed one short parting, and that calm August evening in the old orchard, with the sun's last rays slanting through the apple-boughs, rises sadly in my memory from the mist of years, and conjures up once more that sweet face—now, alas! composed in the last long dreamless sleep. For Estella lies at rest in yonder pretty churchyard, and the village children come to gather violets at her grave.

But to return. Longing to escape from those scenes so fraught with sweet associations and happy memories, where every tree and mossy bank had its own story, I bid adieu to my sorrowing parents, and with a somewhat scantily-furnished purse, sailed for Australia, in the vain hope of drowning all memory of the past in some profitable and congenial occupation, which would tax my energies, mental and physical alike, and tear away the cobwebs of romance, and hapless love from my youthful brain.

I need not dwell upon my ten years' sojourn in the colony, but will only say that I took to the occupation of sheep-farming, and by dint of great energy and perseverance gradually amassed a small fortune. But in spite of the change of scene, and the enforced activity of my new life, I never forgot Estella. Of course I heard of her in my parents' letters; that, although she shone pre-eminently in her new sphere, and was beloved by all, yet still she was evidently gradually pining away,

and her hidden sorrow, like a canker, was slowly eating into her heart, and undermining her health. Her husband also treated her harshly, it was said, and soon wearied of his bride. In short, it was evident that the union was a most unhappy one, and I heard that her beauty was of a softer and more delicate type now, and the roses on her cheeks were paling day by day; so thus the ten years passed away with but little variety in these tidings of my old love, and at last I embarked for the dear old land on a bright spring morning in 186—.

I well remember the strange emotions, alternating between joy and sorrow, that filled my breast, as, after a prosperous voyage, we anchored at Liverpool on a lovely summer evening—joy to be once more near her, and bitter anguish at the thought of the gulf between us. My father had told me the name of Sir Arthur's country-seat, where they at present resided: Mere Hall it was called, about fifty miles from Liverpool, in the county of Cheshire.

It so happened that my father was called away on urgent business to town a day or two before I landed (my mother had died several years before), so I postponed my visit to the dear old house in the suburbs of the town, and after a few hours' rest at an hotel, I was whirled away towards the little town of M——, within a few miles of Mere Hall.

Leaving the quaint little place, with its red brick houses and staring green shutters, behind me, I proceeded on foot towards the village of Crawmere, which I was informed, was close to the Hall. The village was

only a couple of miles distant, and my road lay through pleasant fields and woodland glades, all bathed in the golden glow of a calm August evening. I strolled on in a dream, my heart quickening a little perhaps as I wondered how Estella would receive me—whether she would recognize me, now I was so altered—and how Sir Arthur (whom, strange to say, I had never seen) would take my visit.

I was roused from my reverie by the sound of wheels, and looking up I perceived I was close to the village churchyard, towards which a funeral procession of a hearse, several mourning-coaches, and a long train of mourners on foot, was slowly wending its way. I asked an old labourer who passed by, whose funeral it was, and was informed that it was that of the Squire's lady, the Lady Carlyon, who had died very suddenly only two days before. Again all around me seemed a dream, and the old man's words only caused a dull heavy pain in my heart. Unnoticed and unknown, I mingled with the crowd of mourners, and viewed the sad rites from a short distance. But still the whole scene appeared shadowy and dreamlike to me; yet I can recall it even to the minutest detail still, although more than twenty years have passed away. The ancient grey pile, ivy-mantled and picturesque, with its equally ancient churchyard, overgrown with weeds, and thickly studded with cypress and yews—the tall, stately figure of the widower—the sorrowful faces of the mourners, and lastly, that coffin of oak, upon the silver mountings of which the last rays of the sun were flashing, in which all

that was mortal of my lost love was now lying at rest ; and then the coffin was lowered into the family vault, the mourners gradually dispersed, and the widower, getting into his carriage, was driven towards his home. With that same dull, aching pain at my heart, I entered the village, and selecting a pretty little inn, half hidden in woodbine and clematis, I sat down in my tiny yet comfortable room to muse upon the event I had just witnessed. After trying to take a little refreshment in the sanded parlour, I again retired to my solitary room, and mused long and earnestly in the waning light.

And so the soft summer twilight deepened into night, and still I sat at my little window, the scented night-winds gently fanning my heated brow, and murmuring softly amid the roses, as ever and anon they swayed against the quaint mullioned panes of the tiny casement. Happy memories were borne to me on that evening wind, and the voice of my buried love mingled with its tender sighings, and its gentle rustling amid the honeysuckle and the roses, whilst still dreaming, and unable to realize that afternoon's spectacle, I mused on far into the night. Suddenly a strange revulsion of feeling seemed almost to overpower me, as some memory of the long ago quickened the beating of my heart. What was that memory that at once awoke me from my dream, and disclosed to me the reality of my terrible sorrow ? What was that memory which, while it showed me this, also whispered to me the necessity for instant action, leading me to light my candle, and to search with trembling fingers for a small lantern which I always carried in my

little carpet-bag? Whatever it was, it had changed me in a few moments from a dreamer to a feverishly active and determined man, who had resolved on some perilous and mysterious task, the object of which was known to himself alone. Whatever it was, it led me away from that little chamber, with my lantern closely concealed in the folds of a large cloak, away down the narrow staircase, and out into the placid starlit night. It led me on to the little churchyard, to the heavy doors of the vault in which were sleeping the ancestors of Sir Arthur Carlyon. It was about half an hour after midnight, and not a soul was stirring abroad. My walk to the churchyard had been, I knew, unobserved by any one in the sleeping village, and now, as if still further to favour my design, the aspect of the night changed, and dark threatening masses of cloud began to roll across the sky, soon eclipsing the light of the stars that had hitherto shone so brightly. With a trembling hand I picked the strong lock of the massive door, with an instrument adapted for that purpose which formed part of my heavy clasp-knife, and drawing back the huge bolts from their staples, I opened the door, softly closed it again, and descending a narrow flight of stone steps, entered the dark abode of the dead. Then lighting my lantern, whose imperfect rays cast a murky glare around the vault, and showed me long rows of coffins in which the ancestors of Sir Arthur were sleeping their last long sleep, I commenced my search with a beating heart. I soon paused before a new coffin of polished oak, evidently the last placed there, upon the brass plate of

which I could just read with the dim light, this inscription—

ESTELLA,

The beloved wife of Sir Arthur Carlyon, Bart.,

Died 25th August, 186—, aged 28 years.

Then a fit of dizziness and trembling seized me, and I was compelled to sit down on a neighbouring coffin to meditate awhile on my strange errand.

Could it be that my darling's soul was still cribbed and confined in that narrow coffin, and not yet escaped to the far-off Spirit-Land? I suddenly started from my seat, and trembling from head to foot, began to unscrew the coffin-lid, with the aid of a little turnscrew also attached to my knife. Screw by screw was slowly detached, till at length the lid was raised, and I again gazed on the fair white face of my lost love!

My thoughts instantly reverted to that sultry autumn evening in the old orchard, when I had last seen that sweet face flushed with the rosy glow of health, with the soft love-light shining in the clear blue eyes. How changed was it now! White and calm it was, but not rigid; the features as handsome as ever, though they had lost the roundness of youth somewhat, and were a little sharper, and more defined, than of old.

There lay my beloved one in her ample shroud of spotless white, her small and delicately-formed hands crossed lightly on her bosom, and a white flower placed between her wan white fingers. As I gazed on her fondly, eagerly, and yet with awe, and marked how

calmly and happily she seemed to sleep, I *could* not believe her to be dead; on the contrary, the features lacked the *rigidity* of death, and bending close over her, with my ear at her heart, I fancied I detected the shadow of a sound—the very faintest approach to a gentle and irregular beating of that organ. Joy thrilled through my every nerve. Bending lower still over the sheeted form, chafing the cold limbs, moistening the snowy temples, and murmuring her name in a low, distinct voice, I at length heard her draw a faint breath, and felt a perceptible thrill through her whole frame. Then gradually the stiffened limbs relaxed, a faint flush suffused (as it seemed in the dim light) her face, the eyes slowly opened, pulsation and breathing slowly returned, and Estella raised herself on her arm, and saw me there!

What a moment for me!

For an instant only she looked horrified at the awful surroundings, and seemed not to recognize me, then with a strange cry of joy, she clasped my neck; for something, even in that dim light, told her that her deliverer was none other than her never-forgotten love!

Tremblingly, I raised her gently from her narrow bed, and wrapping her round closely in my long cloak, sat down with her in my arms. In a voice weak and broken at first, but gradually becoming stronger as she proceeded, she told me that Sir Arthur did not know she was subject to these strange visitations. She had, from some strange whim of her own, wished the matter to be scrupulously kept from him, and so he was unprepared. She thought she had entirely outgrown these fits, she

said ; and her parents (who *alone* knew of them) thought with her, that there was not the slightest fear of their recurrence. The *last* thing she remembered was feeding her canary.

From that moment, until she awoke to consciousness in the dreary vault, her existence had been a complete blank. Of course I could not tell how long the trance had lasted, but I fancied, from what subsequently transpired, that it must have been for several days, if not longer.

Her married life, unhappy and loveless, seemed like a hideous dream. That awful blank in her life seemed to have nearly blotted it out altogether, or at any rate had made it seem *unreal* to her, and so far away !

But strange to say, it had *not* effaced that earlier and happier past—the memories of those days when we read from the same pages under the cool green shade of the beech-trees.

All this she told me, as she reclined in my arms in the dark vault, and to my earnest entreaties that she would go with me instantly from the scenes of past suffering and cruelty, she could only murmur a rapturous assent.

Raising her tenderly, I placed a dark velvet smoking-cap (which I had with me) on her head, and bound up her fair tresses as well as I could, to conceal her identity from any prying eyes we might encounter. Then I carried her, for she was as light as a child, out of the abode of death into the dark and solemn night, first taking the precaution to screw down the coffin-lid again,

and replace it in its original position. I managed also to re-fasten the door of the vault, and then with joy I bore my sweet burden to an isolated cottage, a little way out of the village, which I had noticed in the morning. No one was abroad at that untimely hour, so my plan seemed destined to reach a successful issue.

After waiting for about ten minutes for a response to my knock, the door was at last opened by a decrepit old woman, who, shading the flickering candle as well as she could with her trembling hands, asked what I wanted. For reply I bore Estella at once into the little room, and setting her down in a large chair in a dark corner, I turned to the trembling old woman and told her that I had found a poor insane lady, who had escaped from the neighbouring asylum in her night-dress, and whom I was about to convey back again, with her (the old woman's) assistance.

Could she send any one to the village for a conveyance, and in the meantime I would remain with the lady in the adjoining room, as she might become violent at the sight of strangers? Luckily the old woman had a grandson of twelve, who slept upstairs, and he was despatched for the vehicle, whilst I conveyed Estella into the crazy little room at the rear of the cottage. The old woman, who was a motherly soul, ransacked a dilapidated chest of drawers and got out some decent garments that had formerly belonged to her daughter, who had died some years before. I took the clothes to Estella, and leaving a candle on the rickety table, returned to the outer room, where in company with the hostess I

anxiously awaited the arrival of the vehicle. Presently it came, and fetching Estella from the inner room, I wrapped her up in a warm cloak, and placed her inside. A few hurried words of thanks to the old woman, a chink of gold in her scraggy palm, and we were off—free at last !

It was long past midnight, and still very dark, but a glance at my watch told me we should catch the last train to the south from the village of M——, where was the nearest railway-station. Giving the driver, who was inclined to be inquisitive, a guinea as hush-money, and warning him to be silent on the matter, we alighted at the lonely little station, and caught our train. But little more remains to be told. I bought Estella suitable apparel at the town of K——, where we arrived in the early morning, and then snatched a few hours' repose.

The same night saw us safe on board the Calais Packet, Estella still looking weak and ill of course, but she gained in strength and spirits every hour.

We found a home in the South of France, and very shortly afterwards heard of the sudden death of Sir Arthur Carlyon. No obstacle now remained to our union ; Estella's parents had died a year or two before, and my father died soon after our marriage. The strange discovery made in the vault a few days after our flight caused, as may be imagined, great excitement for a time, but at length people ceased to talk about it.

After some years of happiness in our Southern home, we returned to England, and shortly after that event I

laid my darling to rest in the village churchyard, and am now calmly waiting the summons to join her in the "Silent Land."

THE HISTORY OF A HALF-SOVEREIGN.

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

I FIRST saw the light in the year of our Lord 1845, in her Majesty's mint. Many of my brethren came into the world with me, and strange to say, we were all so like each other that you could not perceive any difference in us. The first thing I clearly remember of myself is being in a large drawer with many of my relatives, some of whom were apparently the same age, and others younger or older than myself. From the accidental glimpse I got of the place, when our temporary home was once most unceremoniously pulled into day, I concluded it must be a bank, as many strange beings, with goose-quills behind their ears, were flitting to and fro, whilst others were poring over long columns of figures in musty old books. I was naturally a sensitive and tender-hearted being, and imagine my feelings when daily, sometimes hourly, a huge uncouth hand, seemingly a giant's, would sweep my brethren from my side in the drawer by dozens, though I remained in happy ignorance of their fate. We had mustered some five or six hundred at first, and were as jolly as sand-boys, but this horrible despoiling power, from constant incursions into our retreat, soon reduced us to twenty.

At last there were only three of us left, and then it was a trying time indeed. The thought that all or one of us might be hurried off at any moment to meet the dark, mysterious fate of our lost comrades, and the uncertainty attending that fate, made our little hearts very sad.

Day was our time of danger, for then the place outside, from the strange noises we heard, was evidently full of beings of some kind, and besides, all our brethren had been carried away by daytime. But in the long dark nights of winter, when our little home, always dingy, was as dark as the grave, it was dreary work indeed. Lucky for us if we were huddled one on another for warmth's sake, as we chanced to be sometimes, for we had not the power of locomotion, and in whatever position we chanced to be thrown after one of those terrible incursions, so we had to remain. These incursions being, as before stated, of frequent occurrence, scarcely two nights saw us in the same positions ; sometimes all together, at others in opposite corners, and sometimes in a ring. At any rate we were near enough to converse with each other in our own way, and that was something. Sometimes in the depths of night we would hear strange steps pattering over the roof of our dwelling, which alarmed us a good deal at first, but one of our number declaring they were only mice, we soon got the better of our fears. At length on an unhappy day my two remaining comrades were taken, and I was left alone in undisputed possession. I thought I should have gone wild at first, it was so lonely and dull in that dingy little place, but I was not destined to remain

there long. One fine morning I was roughly dragged from my retreat into the light of day, and I found myself in a jiffy lying in the skinny palm of a withered-looking being, whom I set down as a miser directly. How the old wretch gloated over me, how he languished over the beauty of my fine yellow coat, which was as good as new, till I really feared he would swallow me down-right ! But he presently consigned me to a filthy, dingy corner in a greasy old purse, where I had some common vulgar creatures, bigger than myself, and dressed in brown coats, for my companions. These were of the Penny and Half-penny clan, and I was much too aristocratic to have anything to say to them. There was one other little fellow, about half my size, in a white jacket, who seemed a shade better than the brown affairs, but even he was not the *ton* by any means. He called himself John O'Groat, so there was nothing aristocratic in his name at any rate. Well, we all remained in peace for awhile, except that now and then a brown boy was taken from us, who was scarcely missed. Our master evidently set great store on all of us, as he so seldom diminished our number, till one wet morning, when he was talking to a friend in the street, he suddenly whipped the purse out of his pocket and drew me forth. After gloating over me as he did before, he transferred me to the broad palm of his friend, and what do you think he received in exchange for me ? Ten, yes, actually ten of those white-frosted commoners were handed to him as my equivalent, and from that hour I thought infinitely more of myself than before, and despised the silvery.

gentry more than ever. I was now transferred to a thick iron prison, called, I believe, a safe, where I was confined by lock and key. Here I met lots of my own clan again, and I recognized amongst them one of my old companions in the drawer. Here I remained nearly a year, whilst my friends were often abstracted as in the old days, till one dark winter-night we heard steps approaching the cellar, where our prison was placed, and presently a cautious hand tried to pick the lock of our prison-door. Presently it was gently opened, and I with hundreds of my companions were hastily swept into a large bag, when the thief hurried away. In this bag we all lay some time, when one day, strange to say, I was selected from all the others and vegetated for a few hours at the bottom of my master's pocket, which was remarkably greasy by the way. My next dwelling was in the till of a small shop, where to my infinite disgust I was thrown pell-mell amongst the white and brown creatures, which disgusted me not a little. But my release soon came. Once more I was exchanged for another lot of white-robed snobs, and this time I fell into the hands of a schoolboy, who seemed to have got me entirely for my golden coat, which he was never tired of admiring. He kept me in his waistcoat pocket in company with a few crumbs of mouldy biscuit, a clasp-knife, and a piece of string. He would take me out about twenty times a day, send me spinning into the air, when I turned ever so many somersaults, and then adroitly catch and pocket me again. This, you would think, was barbarous enough, but worse was behind. Some little wretch like

himself had actually the audacity to make guesses, during these compulsory somersaults of mine, as to whether I would eventually alight on my head or my heels! Nice amusement this for a personage of my exalted notion, and aristocratic ideas, to be the sport of a couple of schoolboys! But somehow my gymnastics did not hurt me, and owing to the roughness of my hide did me scarcely any injury. But my adventures are nearly over; my little master one day presented me to a young man of twenty summers or so—his elder brother I took him to be—and what do you think this incarnate fiend did with me? He happened to be in love with a pretty girl, so one day he actually *divided* me,—yes, cut me clean in two (though the operation was a painless one) and hanging half my body on his watch-guard, he gave the other to his *enamored*, who suspended it on hers. Henceforth mine has been a dual existence, but I need not say which of my homes is the pleasantest one. To be attached to the watch-chain of a beautiful maiden of seventeen, in company with a tiny key, a locket, a steam engine, and mimic key bugle; to be comfortably clasped between her snowy fingers in a very loving way, and occasionally pressed to her dainty lips, is, you will allow, a most enviable fate, and I am more thankful than I can tell you that my adventures are over.

A REMINISCENCE.

I MUSED thoughtfully in my study in the solemn stillness of the summer night. The lamp was turned down low

and the soft subdued light of the apartment harmonized well with the strange and shadowy thoughts that flitted through my brain. Half buried in the purple velvet of a luxurious fauteuil, I contemplated the costly appointments of the chamber with a dreamy yet complete sense of security and repose. The bay-windows fronting me, draped with claret-coloured damask and snowy muslin, opened on the moonlit ocean, whose gentle murmur fell at intervals on my ears. Two other bay-windows on my right looked out on a well-kept lawn, on either side of which were parterres of lovely flowers, whose gay hues, indistinguishable at that hour, made the spot another Eden by day. A door on my left led into a small inner room, not much used by me, and another behind my chair, as I then sat, opened on a corridor of some length, at one end of which a few steps led down into the garden. I have been thus particular in describing the *arrangements* of the place for reasons which will appear as my story proceeds. I have already said with what dreamy satisfaction I gloated over the appointments of my snuggery. The room itself, though small, was lofty, and hexagonal in shape. The base of the hexagon (which was irregular) was formed by the wall behind me, and the two bay-windows fronting on the ocean were inclined to each other at an angle, with about ten feet of wall between. The walls were covered with a paper of great delicacy—the ground of light grey figured with brown and gold; a few exquisitely coloured crayons and some rare aquatinta designs depended from the walls in light gilt frames, whilst a fine bust of Venus in plaster of Paris, raised on a

low pedestal of Parian marble, stood on the table at my elbow. The furniture of the room was of light walnut, and the feet sank low in a rich Turkey carpet; a few tastefully-bound books and pretty nicknacks lay on the centre table and some more of the latter graced several smaller tables at the angles of the room. A beautiful ormolu clock, representing a Bacchanalian procession, ticked on a slab of the purest Parian marble, and a lovely bouquet of azaleas and other flowers graced a cut-glass vase on the centre table; on each of the smaller tables were also antique vases profusely heaped with roses and geraniums, whose united perfume almost acted as an opiate on the senses. Flowers indeed were the *prevailing* decoration of the apartment and attested the whim of its owner, who loves them both for their own sakes and the gentle associations they ever call up in his brain. In this room, and amid these objects, I mused far into the still summer night. As I glanced through the bay-windows on the gently heaving breast of the ocean, where the soft moonbeams were playing, the tremulous motion of the billows made low fairy music, to which the soft breezes of the night kept time as they whispered amongst the trees in the garden. In, those mysterious zephyrs came, like restless spirits rustling the snowy curtains, and kissing the flowers in the vases—then they departed, but to come again, and still their low whispers kept time with the music of the sleeping ocean—and still I mused on, on through the quiet hours, my senses drugged with the rich perfume around me, and then a vision of that lovely child flitted before me

as I had but that day seen her. Large liquid *blue* eyes, in whose depths seemed mirrored an infinity of innocent love ; a broad beautiful brow swept by masses of *true* golden hair that streamed in rich profusion far below her waist ; a perfect nose, and a dimpled mouth whose kisses would atone for a lifetime of misery ; a complexion fairer than the fairest lily, and a fairy figure uniting the airyness and grace of childhood (I did not think her more than sixteen) with the roundness of maturer years ; a voice music itself, and a smile that seemed caught from a sun-beam. Such was that lovely child, and was it strange I felt an interest in her, though we had never exchanged a word with each other ? Her home was near my cottage, and I saw her almost daily, *longing*, yet, for some unaccountable reason, almost *dreading*, to accost her. But there was that in the more than mortal beauty of that child which made her image "the morning star of memory" with me, and it seemed to follow me everywhere. In the depths of that summer night, with all its softening associations, my desire to see and speak to her in that room, and at that hour, ripened into a firm resolve to do so. *But how ?* For some time I sat motionless, wrapped in thought, my features rigidly set, though the muscles of my mouth were working, my gaze fixedly bent on the moonlit ocean. *I had solved the problem*, and was exerting my power of will to its fullest extent to bring her to me there. Suddenly I raised my head and listened. Heavens ! Was that fancy, or was it really a light step I heard on the garden walk ? On it came up the steps, softly and gently along the corridor leading to my door.

My heart beat wildly, and in spite of a delirium of joy, a strange awe overshadowed my spirit. But there came a gentle knock at my door, and without waiting for a reply some one entered; turning suddenly round, I saw that beautiful child! There she stood, just within the room, as though hesitating to approach further. There she stood, clad in simple white, with a blue sash tied coquetishly round her left shoulder and fresh flowers in her golden hair; a smile parted her lovely lips whilst her sweet young face was irradiated with joy. And then she told me how that sleep had refused to close her eyelids that night, and as she lay musing suddenly an irresistible impulse seized her to go to my cottage. She had at first ridiculed the notion to herself as wild and absurd, but the impulse grew momentarily stronger, till at length she could no longer resist it, and was obliged to yield. On her way to my abode a strange interest which (so she confessed) she had ever taken in me ripened into feelings of a softer and more dangerous nature; in other words there came the dawns of pure unfathomable love, and this had led her to adorn her hair with flowers as she went along, that her beauty might be heightened still more in my eyes. And then I, who had for long years been a lonely, solitary man, took that beautiful child to my heart, where she was happy, only *there* she said. And there we sat on, listening *together* now to the whispers of the zephyrs and the melancholy music of the ocean, her golden tresses covering my shoulders and her large eyes raised to mine in trustful love, whilst the summer night waxed apace and the stars began to put out their lamps in the sky. Then

that beautiful child, as pure and good as one of God's holy angels, left me and returned to her home, whilst I felt such calm and perfect joy as rarely falls to the lot of mortals. That was a strange wooing, reader, the *first and last!* I am no longer a lonely and morose man now; my beautiful child-wife (we were married a few days after) is also my "Guardian Angel," and we have spent many a summer night since then watching the moonlit ocean from those same bay-windows in my favourite study.

A SAD STRANGE STORY.

I AM prematurely old. Though not yet forty, my hair is as white as snow, and such deep unutterable grief is stamped on my countenance that my death would be deemed a happy release for me by all my friends. I *know* they think so, and I long to go too, long to go to *her*, and learn from her lips in Heaven that secret which was never to be divulged on earth. My whole life is now a dream—nothing seems real—human beings seem as shadows, and come and go unnoticed by me, for the mental film which has darkened my intellect seems to have obscured my eyes as well, and I see all "as in a glass, darkly." *Not* all though—one joy remains, an oasis amid a world of misery—the face of Nature can charm me still, and the sight of distant woodlands standing out against the fair evening sky, of waving corn-fields and pleasant cottage homes, together with the

ripple of crystal waters mingling with the sweet song of some late birds—these sights and sounds can still soothe my breast and bring me a brief respite from sorrow. I thank God for that, and I seem always to be nearer my lost darling at such times. Sometimes I fancy her voice is borne on the odorous night-breeze; but soon the breeze dies away, and with it my vague imaginings. It is now twenty years since I lost her—*how wearily* they have dragged along! She was barely one-and-twenty when I married her, and lovely beyond comparison. I *cannot* bring myself to describe her even on paper; enough for me that I see before me now that wealth of hair which descended far below her waist, its countless ripples flashing back the sunbeams; enough for me that I can recall her large and wonderful grey eyes with a something in them that *I even* could never fathom, and yet their glance could never be forgotten; there was more of Heaven than earth there. She loved me to distraction, and our tastes were very similar. Our home was fixed in a secluded yet beautiful spot, the surroundings such as we both loved,—deep umbrageous woods, pleasant meadows, and beyond, the “everlasting hills.” We sketched, gathered wild flowers, read our favourite authors together, and rambled away the summer’s day through many a “lovely dell” and old forest aisle, till the shades of evening warned our footsteps homeward—and what a home it was! Our little drawing-room was a gem in its way—the countless elegant nicknacks so tastefully yet carelessly arranged, the correct adjustment of the damask curtains so as to produce the necessary lights and shades,

the frequent bouquets of fresh flowers dispersed here and there, the work-boxes, the scraps of lace and ribbon (so dear to woman) scattered about, the albums, the half-finished sketches,—all these attested the presence of the gentler and softer sex, without whom a home is unworthy of the name. And in the stormy nights of winter, when the shrieking winds were howling their loudest, and the moon was wreathing in white the bleak uplands and the deserted fields, it was doubly HOME. Then the bright fire on the cosy hearth would make our little room look more cosy still, as it flashed merrily out, lighting up all the dark corners and many recesses, while the quaint shadows danced fitfully on the walls. And then amid the howling of the storm without, as the pure snow fell noiselessly, or the rain plashed savagely against the window-panes, would my darling lay her beautiful head on my lap, as I reclined in my easy-chair, while her long tresses caught a warmer glow from the firelight. Then would she raise her wonderful eyes to mine, and there, alas! did I often see, amid all the serenity, the happiness, and the love that slumbered there, a *strange* half-sad expression, almost unearthly, that I could never fathom. She had told me before we married that her life, otherwise so joyous, was marred by some dark secret, one that she could never divulge even to me, and which *might* (her lips trembled as she said it) *separate us before death*. She asked me whether, knowing this, I still wished to wed her, whether I *dared* face the unknown evil. “She could never love again,” she said, “but a man was differently constituted; he—” but I

cannot write more of this ; the reader will have seen the end. And as I said before, our early married life was more than usually happy. That sad abstracted look of hers, which seemed to pierce to my soul when I saw it, was the only cloud on my horizon. We married in spring, and during the summer (we only had one together) our woodland rambles seemed to benefit her, both mentally and physically. Naturally delicate, the rich glow of health began to mantle in her cheek, whilst her spirits were more uniformly buoyant. But I noticed that whenever I chanced to mention the month of *February*, however casually, that strange look came into her eyes. I once mentioned this coincidence to her, but she *implored* me for her sake never to recur to the fact again. She was so earnest, and her whole manner was so strange, that I had nothing left but to comply. So the summer and autumn passed, and winter came, but I seldom saw that look, and I have said how happy we were. One night in *February*—and a wild, stormy night it was—she was resting her head on my lap as usual, when that look came ; it soon passed, however, and she kissed me passionately. Then I remember she left me a moment to go to her room, as she said, to fetch something. I watched the flutter of her white dress as she disappeared, and my eyes lingered lovingly on her fairy form and sweet face as she tripped away, casting a loving glance at me the while. Scarcely had she gone when I remembered it was *February*, and with a cold feeling of terror and awe on me, I went to seek her. *I never saw her again* ; in the room to which she had gone her candle

was burning, but it was tenantless. No bolt had been drawn from the door, no shutter had been disturbed, the servants had not seen or heard her, but *she was gone, and for ever!* Whither? Not into the dark, tempestuous night, surely not there—but *whither*, and *why?* These questions, gentle reader, will never be answered on earth. I shall meet her in Heaven and there learn from her own lips this strange mystery. And now I am an altered man. Nearly twenty years have passed since then; our former home is some thousands of miles away from my present abode, and maybe is occupied by strangers. *How long* ago those happy days seem now! *Her* relations were of course plunged into deepest grief at the time, mingled with astonishment, but Time, the great renovator, has, I believe, much softened their sorrow. Not so with me—I *dare not* seek for a solution of the mystery (though something like one flashes on my brain at times), but still through the stormy nights of winter and the still hours of summer twilight, I sit waiting—watching.

FORE-WARNED IS FORE-ARMED

THE events which I am about to relate, strange, nay even supernatural though they be, are yet *true*. So extraordinary is my story that I am fully prepared to be taxed with imposture and mysticism by a sceptical world, perhaps even with insanity. In a word I expect few

if any to believe my narrative. Yet the incredulity of the universe cannot mar the *consciousness* of truth which pervades my spirit, as I write these lines. I *know* what I have seen with these eyes, dim and feeble now, what I have heard with these ears, soon perchance to be closed to every earthly sound. Who dare deny that to the most highly gifted and etherealized natures amongst us, those who retain above their fellows the mark of the Creator's finger, visions glorious, unearthly, mystical, may sometimes be patent, and yet the entranced one makes no sign. Sounds beyond our usual range, may often strike upon the ears of such beings as these, liquid, undefined tremulous sounds which may be the plashing of the fountain before God's throne; and yet the hearers are mute. And mute have I been as to the scene and sounds of that dreary evening in November, forty years ago, even until now—the new and better life came, the blossom expanded and bore much fruit, but the *cause* of all was locked in the innermost recesses of my breast. But now, as I am tottering on the very verge of the grave, I feel I should die all the more happily for leaving my tale as a legacy to the rising generation.—It may serve to warn them in time against that canker of all true happiness, a cynical and morose disposition. To begin. The 27th of November, 1830, had passed drearily enough. All the day dark and wild-looking clouds had been chasing each other through the wintry sky, and the November blasts had been holding revels. Sharp angry gusts had whistled over lonely, far-off moorlands, shrieked through the leafless branches of the deserted forest, torn round

62 *SKETCHES IN PROSE AND VERSE.*

the gables of old-fashioned country-houses, driving the cold rain remorselessly against the mullioned panes, and making the warm and happy groups within, congratulate themselves on being beyond its cruel power.—As evening approached, the fitful gusts became more continuous, and at length freshened to a perfect gale. Night came on intensely dark, and with it terrible storms of rain and hail, which beat savagely against the windows of my cosy study. It was indeed a night of all others for sitting over a bright coal-fire, with ones slippered feet on the fender, and sipping Chateau Lafitte, or old port. And so I thought that evening, as having finished a good dinner, I wheeled an armchair close to the fire, and replenishing my glass from a decanter which stood on a small side-table at my elbow, sipped and mused alternately. Peering hard into the recesses of the glowing coals, and seeing there all kinds of fantastic shapes, and faces known long ago, gradually the features of one who was the best loved of all, shaped themselves for me, far more distinct than the rest, and I grew very sad. Ten years had passed then since I lost her, and her death had proved a doubly bitter epoch in my life. Whilst she was with me, all had been sunshine with us, my natural acerbity and moroseness of disposition gradually softening beneath the influence of her bright smile and gentle voice, as the snow melts beneath the burning glances of the sun. But God was pleased to exchange that joyous smile for another, a nobler and calmer one that illumines the cold white face of death. He was pleased to say “Hush” to that gentle voice which was

the music of my life, and it fell upon my ears no more. No more save in pleasant dreams of calm summer nights, and then came the awakening to loneliness and silent sorrow. When my Guardian Angel had gone, my old cynicism, and moroseness returned, linked as I grew older, with the besetting vice of avarice. By dint of considerable talent I had risen rapidly in my profession, that of a lawyer, and had amassed wealth. But friends I had none. My parents long since dead, and but few of any kith or kin left, I was too proud to *seek* friends, and those who seemed inclined to fraternize with me, were soon deterred by my harsh and repellent manner from making further advances. Often and often had I spurned the starving outcast from my doors, though he had begged with streaming eyes, but for a morsel of bread and a temporary shelter from the storm. I had, too, been hard with my poorer clients, widows and orphans, and had not hesitated to extort their last penny from them, little recking of their misery as long as I could fill my coffers, and eat of the fat of the land. I was not, moreover, very scrupulous in my many schemes and plottings in honour of Mammon, and my tell-tale conscience tormented me fearfully at times. The reader will pardon this digression, for the fancied face in the firelight brought my past and present life back to me but too vividly, and with something like remorse I turned from what I was, to what I had been—only for a minute or two, however, then with a contemptuous “pshaw” I started from my reverie, poked the fire, and lighting a fragrant “Cuba” threw myself back in my easy-chair with a sense of

dreamy satisfaction. I built strange castles in the air amid the wreaths of smoke that curled gracefully above my head and reflected rather complacently on the contents of the strong-box in my bedroom, where there was gold enough to buy up the whole county. Glancing sleepily at a timepiece on the mantel—I saw that it was half-past nine o'clock. Once more I abandoned myself to literally a golden reverie, for guineas, guineas, nothing but guineas glistened amid the smoke-wreaths. —Gradually the glitter of the coins waxed duller and duller, the smoke-wreaths more indistinct, till at length the cigar dropped from my hand and I slept. When I awoke the fire had burned down very low, and as I had partially turned down the argand lamp previously to my nap, part of the room was buried in deep shadow. The fast-expiring embers flickered weirdly and fitfully on the objects in their vicinity, and it was bitterly cold. The tempest seemed to be at its loudest, and the shrieking blasts drove the rain more savagely than ever against the window-panes. A strange feeling of desolation mingled with shadowy terror stole over me, as I looked at the clock on the mantel—it was close on midnight. Suddenly a cold perspiration stood on my forehead, and my heart beat violently—a cold, strange, undefinable terror, such as I had never experienced before, seemed to thrill through me—aye to the very marrow of my bones, and I felt I was not the *sole occupant* of that silent, dimly-lighted chamber. Trembling violently, I raised my eyes from the expiring fire to an armchair, a facsimile of the one I occupied,

on the other side of the fireplace—on it was seated an old man, evidently infirm and bent down beneath a weight of years, habited in a suit of rusty black, with threadbare knee-breeches, a large white cravat round his wrinkled throat, and his feet encased in a well-worn pair of shoes with enormous steel buckles. His hair, which was grizzled and thick, streamed down his shoulders, and his head was supported on his withered old palms, his elbows resting on his knees. His face being partially averted from me, and half buried in his hands I could not distinguish his features. At first, sheer bewilderment as to how he could have entered the house and room without my knowledge (the front and back doors and windows having been securely bolted and barred some hours before), quite absorbed every other feeling, and I sat stupefied. I seemed to have lost all power of volition, my limbs seemed powerless and beyond my control, my tongue seemed to cleave tightly to the roof of my mouth, and I could make no sound. I remember well how we sat there for a long time in silence, my eyes riveted in a kind of fascination upon the strange crouching figure at my fireside, and my mind rife with a thousand wild surmises as to his appearance there, and the object of his visit. At length the first shock of surprise having abated, my deadened faculties slowly re-asserted their sway ; I seemed once more to be possessed with nerves, and volition returned to me. The stranger all this time had remained motionless in the same attitude—not a muscle had stirred. At length with a superhuman effort, I rose from my seat, and was about

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advancing towards my visitor, when he raised his head suddenly, and looked me full in the face—I sank back in the chair from which I had just risen, once more dumb with horror. Such a face, one that I never wish to see again, such as I had never looked on before! Deeply furrowed with wrinkles, yet of cadaverous whiteness, with small wicked-looking red eyes that seemed to blaze beneath their pent-house of long grey lashes, and a forbidding brow, and white thin lips turned down at the corners—lips such as one would think would never open but to lie or blaspheme. Such was that face as seen in the uncertain light—the rays of the fire played weirdly across its pale rugged surface (the eyes being still fixed on me), making it yet more horrible. A face where all the worst passions and vices incidental to our fallen race, lust, revenge, avarice, hypocrisy, malice, seemed to have set their stamp—the face of one who had grown old in unimagined wickedness, and yet the expression was one of deep-rooted misery and settled gloom. I noted all this whilst the red eyes appeared to pierce the innermost recesses of my soul by their own unhallowed light, and I felt the strange being before me was none of earth's sons, but a wanderer from the spirit-land. At length, unable any longer to stand the scrutiny of those terrible eyes, I broke silence, "Who and whence art thou, old man, and why dost thou seek to disturb my repose?" Without withdrawing his eyes, the old man replied in low sepulchral tones, "I am come to warn you ere it be too late; *why*, you may yourself discover." Looking earnestly into that forbidding face,

a new horror filled my soul, for white, wrinkled, and weather-beaten as it was, I traced a clear resemblance between its features and my own—yes, there could be no doubt of it. Twenty or thirty years perhaps had passed over my head, but in every movement of the spare sinewy frame, in every gesture, in the cut of the clothes, in the shape of the hands, nay, even in the voice itself, I saw *myself*—horrible thought!—as I should be in the future! The old man had risen from his chair, and was warming his skinny palms at the few remaining embers. He seemed perfectly at home, and I noticed that he glanced round the chamber with the air of one who had surveyed it often before, and knew every nook and corner of it. Suddenly he again spoke—“A brave chamber in sooth and well appointed; but a *change will come*. Shall I show you another picture?” Suddenly, as though by magic, the costly room disappeared, and I was crouching by a wretched fire in a small garret, in one corner of which was a poor truckle bed covered with straw. A few people whose faces were known to me stood by talking softly, and gazing at the occupant of the bed. I followed their eyes, and there I saw the figure of the old man, my future self, stretched in the last agonies of death—“Poor old fellow,” I heard one of the bystanders say, “I never envied him even when he was rich, and it was just as well all his money was stolen from him last year, for it never brought him aught but misery; and see him now dying a neglected and friendless pauper.” I heard no more—the scene again changed and I was once more sitting in my costly room, with the old

man standing on the hearth-rug eyeing me maliciously. "Have you seen enough?" he inquired, "or shall I show you more?" "Forbear," I murmured, my voice trembling through excess of horror and wonder. "Can I not avert my fate?" The old man fixed his wicked eyes on me, and laying his withered hand on my shoulders, made answer, "You can.—I died many, many years ago, and my career was a fearful one. As an additional punishment for my crimes, I am this night sent from the shadow-land to warn you. I am compelled, as you see, to assume your future form and mien, and in addition to my just, but intolerable load of remorse, I am now tortured with a vicarious agony, nearly equalling my own. In a word I am *yourself* as you will be when old, and all the remorse which you will then feel for a godless, ill-spent life, is now racking my unhappy soul. Towards *you* the indirect cause of my double burden what can I feel but *undying hatred*? Would that you may slight my *forced* warning, and become as myself, but howe'er that be, I shall hate you for ever." With one malignant glance from his red eyes, he was gone. A cold horror seemed to pass away from me, some dread weight seemed removed from my breast, and I looked around. The fire had gone out, and the cold, feeble glare diffused by the turned-down lamp served to show me that it was one o'clock. The Phantom had been with me an hour, as near as I could guess. Those awful words "hate you for ever" seemed still ringing in my ears, as lighting my bed-room candle, I went up the broad stairs to my chamber. But the scenes of

that terrible night made me a changed man, and since then I have been happy. Now that my life's sands are ebbing fast, I give to the world the cause of the metamorphosis.

IN DREAMLAND.

MANY years ago I seemed to awake from my slumbers in the dead of night, when the midsummer moon was riding high in the heavens. The weather was excessively sultry, and the breezes wandered in and out at the open windows, laden with rare perfume from the slumbering flowers. I have said, I seemed to awake, and I did so in an agony of fear. I became slowly conscious that some awful change had passed over me. Body and soul had lost their apparent entity, my being was divided, I felt that form and substance had departed, but my spirit, the real and pure essence of existence, remained. My intellectual powers seemed unbounded, all the most abstruse questions in science and theology were plain as day to my perfected understanding. My memory also had become unconceivably great. No longer the imperfect faculty of an imperfect state, where the boundless aspirations of the soul are marred and cramped by its incarceration in a fleshy prison, my past life was spread out before me like a book. Not an act that I had ever done, not a thought that had ever flashed meteor-like across my spirit, not a word I had ever uttered but were there—nothing was omitted. The once imperfect faculty

had ripened into one of the many perfect and glorious attributes of the spirit-life. Yet another wonder. With such a perfect knowledge of the past, and an intense appreciation of the present, in all its fulness of bliss, I had lost all idea of the future. In a word, all prophecy was merged in the intensity of present happiness. But there are yet stranger things to tell. So far I have dwelt upon metaphysical changes. I will now relate those that came upon material things. On my apparent awakening to consciousness from sleep, I seemed to be in the middle of my apartment. I recognized it at once, but there was an inexplicable sense of vastness about it then. A strange, pale light suffused all, and articles of furniture and pictures that were usually within a few yards of me, from my present position now loomed indistinctly at some distance. Yet, as far as I could tell, the familiar objects were all there though seen so dimly. Suddenly the whiteness of the bed furniture broke through the uncertain light, and by mere volition, as it seemed, I was beside it in a moment; on it lay in a natural position my own form, the face was of a death-like pallor, and the dull, lustreless eyes, which were open to their full extent, stared horribly at me. The soul, the true vital spark, had fled, and the empty frame of clay was all that remained. A strange unfathomable awe crept over me at the sight of this poor silent body, this whilom tenement of my now released soul, under such circumstances, and at such an hour. Its pallor, contrasting with the strange, pale light that flooded the room, rendered its aspect yet more horrible, and I

seemed to hasten from it on wings. Sounds of fairy-like music entranced me, as I passed through the open window into the garden. On, on, it seemed to beckon me as I glided over the smooth turf, through an atmosphere redolent with sweeter perfume than earthly flowers can give. Unlike the chamber, the garden and its surroundings were entirely changed. The moon shone with supernatural radiance upon scenes of unearthly loveliness ; upon beautiful orange and myrtle groves, through which sequestered paths wound in all directions, the boughs intertwining lovingly overhead, and flowers of rarest beauty blushing on either side ; upon stately terraces with balustrades of the purest marble, looking down upon smoothly-shaven lawns where fountains of gold and silver were playing, and tossing the feathery spray high into the moonlight ; upon crystal streams that rippled musically through the orange groves, and, lastly, upon a fine expanse of flower-spangled fields, cool, shadowy woods and lonely dells, the whole bounded by the blue hills dimly seen in the far distance. Such were the scenes that the moon lighted up so brilliantly on that midsummer night, and through which I wandered with the ecstatic joy of a newly-disenthralled spirit. Misty indistinct forms moved hither and thither, in complete silence. They glided swiftly by me at every turn in the orange glades, they wandered over the noble terraces, and lingered by the sides of the fountains. Others seemed to cull the fruitage from the dusky trees, but their actions and their gestures like their shapes were so indistinct that I could make little of them. Their forms

were dimly seen through a thin grey mist that enveloped them like a crowd. The lineaments, or what seemed to be such, of those who passed me in the groves were, as far as I could discern, stern and pale, with eyes of startling brilliancy. Sometimes I fancied I recognized friends long since dead, sometimes well-known characters in history, but all was mere conjecture, so restlessly and swiftly did they shoot by. I was totally unregarded by them, as though my arrival in their demesne had been expected. None accosted me or each other, but flitted about in gloomy silence. But though no voices broke that silence, the most exquisite and ethereal melody floated through the heavy perfumed air. Softly and sweetly that unearthly music welled up from the depths of the lonely dells, now lingering in the depths of the dim forests, and now mingling with the song of the rivulets as they rippled through the myrtle groves. But the sweetest strains of all came from a vast fabric at the end of a long terrace, a mass of fretted gold and silver work, but so airily and delicately fashioned that it might have been built of the moonbeams which played upon its pinnacled towers, and kissed its rarely coloured Gothic windows. The shades were pouring in through the chief entrance, and I would have followed, but some unknown power detained me, so I lingered at the gate. Gradually the music waxed fainter and fainter, and millions of strange voices sang :—

THE SPIRITS' SONG.

Our's a fair yet strange demesne,
Where the moon doth never wane,

We, a weird and shadowy throng,
 Pour out this our even song,
 Whilst rare music soft and low
 In a solemn measured flow,
 Welleth up for evermore !
 Ever—evermore !

In this temple vast and dim
 Sing we our diurnal hymn,
 While pale Luna's silvery ray
 Makes an ever glorious day,
 Kissing all the tracery rare
 On yon Gothic window there,
 Making all around more fair,
 Fairer, yet more fair !

And we love our ancient home,
 Love all silently to roam
 Through the cool umbrageous wood,
 By the flower-bordered flood,
 Whilst at quiet eventide,
 Here we gather side by side,
 Listening to the music's flow,
 Sometimes deep-tongued, sometimes low,
 Flowing on for evermore !
 Ever—evermore !

Here the voices ceased, the vast temple slowly dissolved away into thin air, and I awoke to find it was only a dream.

MAGAZINE POETRY.

"DARK BLUE."

THE following sonnet, or whatever the reader likes to call it, is in the February number of *Dark Blue*, and we quote it to show how easily some magazine editors are

satisfied in the matter of verses now-a-days. The Poem in question is the second of "Two Pictures," and a very queer picture it truly is. The first "Picture" will pass muster perhaps. Here is the second :—

II.

A proud, firm, queenly form, splendour and bloom,
 Youth and an insolent glory, burn and gleam
 Around her—grand, intolerable, intense—
 Through gorgeous glimmers of voluptuous gloom
 That fold her, while the fierce light's golden beam
 Threads the dim shade and flashes on the sense
 Pale brows, where dreams unutterable sleep,
 Hard eyes like diamonds, glittering cold and keen,
 Dark lashes with the proud imperial sweep,
 White drooping lids, so dazlingly serene
 Beneath the wild magnificence that stays
 And winds and wantons o'er the queenly brow,
 E'en to the snowy shoulder : white and warm
 Throbs the full throat, love-dinted even now,
 And full breasts heave where failing drap'ry betrays
 The lithe, smooth-rounded undulating form,
 Gauze-cinctured, yielding, languorous—the while
 One indolent hand adjusts the wreathed hair,
 And one arrests the sliding robe for shame,
 But the red luscious lips too tremblingly close
 To hide the agonies that slumber where
 Hot love too real mocks that proud cold smile,
 And the frail vestures quiveringly declare
 We be but lightly clasped—her shuddering frame
 Struggles and pants for ruinous repose.

Now, the general effect here is good, because *unique*. The effect of a true poem should be unique ; that is, after perusal the mind should be able to grasp the whole picture conveyed, *at once*. Therefore there can be no such thing as a long *single* poem. The strain upon the

reader's mind is too great, and when he has reached the 10th or 12th line he flings the poem aside, to be finished at another reading, or perhaps in twenty more readings. Thus, the spell once broken, the singleness, the totality of the effect is lost, and the production cannot lay claim to the character of a true poem, though, like *Paradise Lost*, it may consist of a *series*—a mass of pictures—each *picture* a poem in itself. The reader will pardon this digression (if such it be), but we wish it to be clearly understood that the sonnet in question, in possessing this merit of brevity, starts well; it has at least this *sine qua non* of a true poem, and if it can be shown to possess the other requisites of the poem proper, all will be well. But has it these requisites? Let us see. The *conception* is good, at any rate. It is that of a proud, indolent, voluptuous woman musing, in a scene of artificial and gloomy grandeur, upon her love, which, from “the agonies that slumber,” and “the shuddering frame,” we presume is unrequited. So far, therefore, we repeat, in its unity and its conception, the poem is good; though the latter is a trifle hackneyed, perhaps. But nothing can be looser than the rhythm and the metre. The former is evidently meant to be Iambic, but the number of bastard feet is legion. In the very first line, the word “splendour” must be wrongly accentuated to preserve the rhythm. The stress (to make the word an Iambic) must be laid upon the last syllable; but the word is in reality a Trochee. Again, in the 2nd line, “insolent,” a decided dactyle, is tortured into a bastard trochee, for the sake of the rhythm, which

is rather an *insolent* act on the part of the Author, we think. How much more *musically* would the line read thus—

Youth and a regal glory burn and gleam,

where the rhythm, and consequently the music, is preserved. We admit that the epithet “insolent,” as applied to “glory,” is more expressive and more characteristic, under the circumstances; but rhythm must not be sacrificed to expression in this wholesale manner. In line 3, the metre is faulty, because of the word “intolerable,” which, in truth, makes a very *intolerable* line out of what might have been a highly musical one. There is a syllable too much here; *intolerant* might be substituted with advantage, when both rhythm and metre would have been maintained. Again, in line 4—to say nothing of “gorgeous,” which suffers an ugly contraction, we come to a similar barbarism in the very same line, where “voluptuous,” a word of four syllables, has to be compressed into three. But enough of this. These gross inaccuracies of rhythm crowd upon us so thick and fast that we have neither time nor space for pointing out any more. The reader can easily do that for himself. Inaccuracy of rhythm is, in the poem before us, accompanied by incorrectness of metre, which though evidently pentametric, is constantly disfigured by a redundant syllable; that is, if we give each word its proper inflection. We cannot help pointing out those uncouth and jaw-splitting vocables, “dazzlingly,” “languorous,” “tremblingly,” and that questionable adverb, “quiveringly.”

The whole batch is indeed calculated to make one quiver and tremble! In the 20th and 23rd lines, the word "the" must be unduly accentuated to preserve the rhythm, which even then would be faulty, on account of the aforesaid adverbs at the close of each line. Thus, we have seen that the author has failed completely in the purely mechanical part of his art, viz. metre and rhythm, and consequently his lines are robbed of that indispensable attribute of all true poetry—a musical flow. But if the prosody be bad, the grammar and diction is worse. There is *not one* full *stop* from beginning to end of the poem (25 lines), and only one colon. The pauses are marked (and quite incorrectly) by hyphens. Now the hyphen (—) should not be used instead of a stop, but only when we make use of a second thought, as it were, in composition—where we correct or strengthen one expression by another one having a similar tenor. I have just unconsciously exhibited its legitimate use, as the reader will see I had written the word "composition," when I fancied I could make my meaning plainer still, and a hyphen is employed to mark the transition. But in the poem before us, this sign is used indiscriminately for semicolons, colons, and goodness knows what beside! The diction is too ornate, and the author's meaning is half hidden in the mass of sonorous adjectives and uncouth adverbs. This should not be. A pure and refined simplicity is a *sine qua non* of true poetry. The *improprieties of expression*, too, are numerous. How can *gloom glimmer*, and what in the name of goodness is meant by *voluptuous gloom*? Why should dreams take it into

their heads to sleep on brows? (see line 7). Would they not be equally comfortable in eyes or noses? "Dazzlingly serene" is a solecism. The very term serenity implies an absence of glare, does it not? "The full breast heaving where failing drap'ry (*sic*)," &c., is a little *warm*, to say the least of it; and as for what "the frail vestures quiveringly declare"—ah, well! we really cannot pursue that part of the matter farther, but will leave the terrible beauty to what (we are sorry to learn) is her "ruinous repose." Seriously, the author has failed in not only the mechanical, but also the higher and nobler phases of his art; all we can concede him is unity of effect, a fine conception, and a moderate amount of *fancy* (for nothing higher is displayed). In every other point he scores *nil*, and yet this is the kind of writing which, owing to the clique system (and often through interest with the Editor), finds a place in a well-known magazine.

[The above was written many years ago.]

SOCIAL SKETCHES—No. I.

THE PURGATORY OF PLEASURE!

JOHN BULL'S sons and daughters have many strange idiosyncrasies, but their idea of pleasure is perhaps the strangest of all. Country pleasures are intelligible enough, and rational withal, but it is with the pleasures of the London Season that we are concerned just now. Behold a "Drum" or an "at home" in the height of the season. The main object of these institutions appears to

be the resolution of suffering humanity into hot pancakes! Sane folks would, we should think, shun with horror that struggling, perspiring mass of humanity on the staircase, where hair is disarranged, dresses torn to shreds, swallow-tails split across the back, tempers ruffled, caloric evolved but too freely, in short every conceivable kind of misery endured by the votaries of fashion and "cui bono?" Merely to shake hands with a haughty Dame at the top of the stairs, who doesn't care a pinch of snuff for you, and then to struggle *down* the stairs and so into your carriage once more. But you may talk for a *month* afterwards of having been to the Countess of A's "At Home," whilst less fortunate friends listen with respectful awe! What more would you have?—Then there is the delightful London dinner-party, when twenty guests sit at a table that can only accommodate ten with any comfort! Ah, that "mauvais quart d'heure" before dinner, before which the most severe penance endured of yore in monkish cell pales into insignificance! Strangers glare at each other in an appalling way, and even friends are apt to wish one another at Jericho; the most wearisome platitudes are reiterated in a listless, dreary way that must sadden the gayest spirits, and each guest's attitude is more or less aggressive, until the "Tocsin of the Soul" breaks on their ears like fairy music!—Then the feast itself, though icy reserve is thawed, and tongues are loosened by mine host's champagne, is a very questionable enjoyment from a rational being's view. The heat—the perpetual clatter of plates and tongues—the limited space you have to

occupy—the insipid and vapid twaddle that passes for conversation—all tend to detract from the small modicum of animal pleasure which is derived from discussing a really good dinner—not that this last phase is by any means universal : on the contrary, a bad fit of indigestion is often one outcome of your delightful dinner-party.

Then there is the delicious musical soirée. In a crowded room heated like an oven, and with the audience at a corresponding temperature, you are forced to listen to the cries of the Grand Old Masters—or rather their death-pangs—as they are massacred, one after another by ruthless amateurs.—“If *this* be *pleasure*—give me pain, —’tis surely sweetest of the twain !”

Then we have the mild dissipation of afternoon tea. Five o’clock tea is *the* term, I believe. Here with a tiny cup of Bohea filled to the brim in one hand, and a bit of cake in the other, you are taken into the confidence of withered old maids, and generally initiated into the mysteries of their poodles’ complaints, and the idiosyncrasies of their next-door neighbours. *Sometimes* you may get the “*benefit of clergy*” (as I did once), when prosy clerics will explain minutely to you the faulty construction of their domiciles, and enlighten you as to where the draught comes in ! And yet all the while, with that horrid little brimming cup of tea in your hand—too hot to drink and nowhere to put it down—you are expected, during the delivery of these homilies, to look not only *at ease*, but highly delighted ? There may be a pretty girl or two, at these “five o’clocks” occasionally, but all I know is I never get near them, but always hap

on the fossilized specimens of society. Altogether we take our "pleasuring" sadly indeed, and in a resigned martyr-like fashion, as though we were doing penance for our many sins, as some of us may really imagine we are. But why make our *social recreations* a vehicle for penance? We do *that*, or *ought to*, in church or closet. Well-planned balls, unconventional lawn tennis parties, free and easy picnics are pleasures indeed, and to be valued accordingly. The working classes reach the *sum-mum bonum* in horse-play, wearing black broadcloth, and getting extremely drunk—a sorry notion of pleasure, truly, but then they act according to their lights—extremes meet, and when we compare their sensual excesses and vulgar revelry, with the stilted demeanour, and bored, listless air of the upper crust when taking *their* pleasure, I am not at all sure whether the one is not quite as rational as the other. "The Purgatory of Pleasure," describes in a word the conventional notion of enjoyment among the Upper Ten.

SOCIAL SKETCHES—No. 2.

TITTLE-TATTLE.

It has always seemed to me that conversation should be enrolled among the arts, and made a special subject of instruction at all the seminaries throughout the land. If boys and girls were formed in special classes for conversation, and forced to talk to each other in an original and intelligent manner for half an hour daily, under the auspices of a master of the art, we should have far fewer

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adult failures in the talking line. To make the instruction *complete* a few boys might be mingled with the girls occasionally, for the ball colloquial should especially be gracefully tossed backwards and forwards between those of opposite sex, without letting it fall to the ground in an ignominious fashion. It may seem an easy art to acquire, but a good talker is "born, not made" after all, and a racy original conversationalist is a *rara avis* indeed. Originality—wit—point—brevity—are all essential elements in the science—*prosing* and *egotism* are fatal foes to it. "*Small-talk*" may be termed the sixpences, fourpenny and threepenny bits of the current conversational coin, but they must be of the *genuine* metal, and not have a spurious ring. To *interest* people about a common topic—to *make the most* of it—to put it in a new light—is the great desideratum here. For even "*small talk*" may be made amusing, bright, and entertaining with a little art and originality thrown in to season it. The scientific jargon that flavours the conversation of Savans, where polysyllables are-frequent, may be called the *crown* pieces and half-crowns of colloquial coin; heavy and solid it may be, but by no means *pure gold*!

Speech is God's noblest gift to man, we presume, but how grossly it is abused! Look at the terrible twaddle that is interchanged over the average dinner-table! Mr. Jones's new front gate, or Mrs. Smith's habit of turning her toes in when she walks, are thought vastly more engrossing subjects than the Eastern Roumelian question, the new uses of the electric light, or the daily wonders of the telephone. The fatal cancer in usual

conversation which eats into its very heart, is the pernicious habit of talking about our *friends* and their *peccadilloes* rather than of *interesting* things in the world of Literature, Science, and Art. This cancer—if we would raise conversation to one of the fine arts—must be *ruthlessly* excised—we must cut deep with the keen knife of intelligence and with a firm hand. When men don't get on theology or politics, their normal club-talk is trivial in the extreme and often merely idle gossip. And yet what a vast field for the exercise of speech is lying around them. But it is the ladies (God bless them and their bright eyes!) who are the worst offenders in this respect! Their sweet tongues are easily loosed, and seem ready to flow on for ever! The stream is decidedly shallow, we fear, but how swiftly it flows! Damaged reputations, the peccadilloes of cooks and parlour-maids, the newest fashion in bonnets, the mysteries of crewel work, the complaints of pet poodles, the failings of their dear friends—none of these come amiss to them; *all* are borne rapidly down the conversational tide in turn, and so pass away, to make room for other equally absorbing and momentous topics! Especially among women when alone is this the case, but the entrance of a few male bipeds only gives the gossip a little more seasoning! Its flavour becomes a little strange perhaps, but loses not a whit of its inanity. The following may pass as a specimen of the normal colloquial tattle.

Mrs. A. : "Is it true she *winks with both eyes*?"

Captain B. : "Who?"

84 SKETCHES IN PROSE AND VERSE.

Miss C. : " Miss M.—the girl with *just* the suspicion of a moustache—don't you know her? "

Captain B. : " Yes, by Jove, but I never noticed it. "

Mrs. D. : " Noticed what? The winking? "

Miss H. : " Why it's as plain as—"

Captain B. : " No, I mean the moustache! " And so *ad infinitum* for half-an-hour longer.

This is hardly exaggerated, and is really very sad indeed—it is enough to make us wish some of our fellow-creatures were born as dumb as a " drum with a hole in it. " Let us think a moment—If only a *tittle* of the human breath that is wasted in " tittle-tattle, " were expended on some *useful* purpose, such as inhaling from the ammoniaphone for instance, or blowing the bellows in the case of a recalcitrant fire, what a much pleasanter world this would be to live in!

SOCIAL SKETCHES—No. 3.

FLIRTATION.

THIS is a delicate subject indeed, and one which requires very careful handling at the hands of the male biped, if he would not bring a whole bevy of his fair acquaintances buzzing about his unlucky ears, accusing him of libel, at the very least. First, then, how shall we define this fascinating pastime which too often proves anything but fun for one of the players. Briefly it may be described as an interchange of soft nothings, never meant to be taken *au sérieux*, with a good deal of dangerous bye-play with eyes and gestures, and often, on the part of the

lady, with her *fan*, if she happens to have that weapon handy. If both players happen to be *born flirts*, there is usually no harm done, each is a *hypocrite* or *actor* in the little drama, and each sees through the other accordingly. But when *one* is in earnest and ignorant of the other's *rôle*, it is a very different matter. We will first suppose *she*, the syren, is the flirt, and *he* the victim, who is lured to his fate by her brilliant eyes and silvery tongue. They have danced together, say, and are sitting out the lancers in an alcove in the conservatory. She is ravishingly dressed, her eyes are bright with real enjoyment, which *he* puts down to the delight she finds in his society, on her soft cheeks is a rosy glow, which is alluring beyond measure. All her charms are heightened by the soft subdued light in which she sits, and there is a delicious *abandon* about her tonight which poor *he* cannot resist! Her tones are sweet and low, and fragrance floats from her bonny brown tresses which, partly unloosened by the dance, stray over her white neck and shoulders. She fans herself in a most provoking way, he thinks, and is for ever shielding her face with that witching weapon, occasionally darting quick bright glances at him over the top of it! The moon shining placidly on them between the rifts of the garden-trees, makes the hour a very dangerous one indeed, and he is in an "earthly paradise!" Her radiant eyes are pregnant with meaning, her replies are soft and tender, and, altogether, he is decidedly "hard hit." Poor fellow! he fancies himself her "*true knight*," little recking that she is merely amusing herself, and

would be equally as lavish of her favours to fifty others did the opportunity present itself. He is but one more captive of "her bow and spear," and his name will be duly inscribed, ere she closes those lustrous orbs of hers, on the lengthy roll of her victims. Let us draw the veil over his "awakening," his frantic jealousy and his wounded pride!

Now for the reverse of the picture, when *he* is the destroyer of a maiden's peace. The scene may remain the same, but *he* is the *hypocrite* or *actor* now, and she the *natural* loving woman who translates his every amorous look and gesture at her own sweet will, with the help of Love's delicious Dictionary! She is *really far more* witching than her false sister was, for a certain *depth* in her glance when their eyes meet as though she saw her *whole world* in *his*, and a certain indefinable and scarcely perceptible tremor in her voice at times tells her tale only too well. *He*, the traitor sees these signs, but they only whet his ardour for conquest the more, experienced fencer with Love's foils that he is! We will consign him to the oblivion that he deserves, merely hoping that *she*, the deceived one, may possess a doughty champion in the shape of some huge brother with biceps of steel! For does not Byron sing:—

"Man's love is from man's life a thing apart ;
 'Tis woman's *whole* existence ; man may range
 The court, camp, church, the vessel, and the mart.

* * * *

Men have all these resources, *we* but *one*—
 To love again, and be again undone!"

Thus, though we regard the *moral* guilt of the male

and feminine flirts as precisely equal, there can be no doubt that *He* is the greatest destroyer of human happiness, for the reasons advanced by the great poet just quoted. And yet flirts have their *use* in the social economy of the universe, or they assuredly would not be there! Like chamois leather, they are admirably adapted *for rubbing up the "spoons,"*—those youthful, awkward male "spoons" we see everywhere. In the hands of a *shy*, simple girl, these "spoons" wax more inane than ever, but let a *bond fide* flirt take one of them in hand, and she is *sure* to make *something* out of him! She rubs him up smartly, rubs the idiotcy off a little, and *makes him talk a bit* in spite of himself. Altogether, though Flirtation does a large amount of *real* harm, it is often a wholesome corrective to juvenile vanity, when the would-be *male biter* is decidedly bit! Feminine flirts, at any rate, can lay claim to the same function in the universe as that of *chamois leather*! Not a *very lofty* one, perhaps, but often very useful in its way.

SOCIAL SKETCHES—No. 4.

ROUND MEN IN SQUARE HOLES.

It would almost seem one of man's primitive impulses that insane desire of his to force himself into a position for which his Maker most assuredly never intended him. How much more easy would the wheels of our social mechanism work, did men but realize a little more clearly their own missions in a sadly muddled world?

88 SKETCHES IN PROSE AND VERSE.

In our belief, nine-tenths of the jarrings and hitches in the social system, any number of heart-burnings and bitter disappointments are to be traced to this cause. If a man once *mistakes* his mission in life, failure and chagrin are inevitable at every turn. He is, metaphorically, a fish out of water, like one who is wearing his neighbour's clothes which don't fit him, he is for ever uncomfortable, and conscious of a certain impropriety and waste of energy which poisons, sooner or later, the springs of his existence. For instance, one conceives that his mission is literature ; so he is for ever scribbling articles or poems that no one reads, or reading books (for conscience sake) that he doesn't understand ! Oh, the gallons of good ink spilt in vain ! The reams of fair foolscap utterly wasted ! He is the round man in the square hole, and his real vocation may be pigs and poultry perhaps, where he would have shone, and have materially added to the comfort of his fellows. Often, whilst cudgelling his brains for romantic ideas, he feels a dim yearning towards short-horns and prize porkers, but angrily strives to banish it as degrading to his higher aspirations ; and so is one more added to the long list of failures. Another imagines it is his mission to take orders, and edify his brothers from the pulpit, where he only supplies the place of chloral or laudanum in the pharmacopœia. As a village doctor he might have done untold good with these same anodynes, and have been a true blessing, instead of the reverse, to long-suffering humanity ! Other gentlemen conceive themselves as intended by Heaven for *directors*, in which office they do

inconceivable harm ; whereas, as quiet country gentlemen leading a jog-trot life, with no particular mission at all, they would have been fulfilling their mute inglorious destinies to the satisfaction of all men ! Multiply these individual instances of social and professional failures by some millions, and we shall then have an idea of the amount of misery they cause in the world at large. How many a true naturalist is lost to the ranks of science by a man who has a natural eye for the peculiarities of a beetle, imagining it to be his mission to *wear silk*, and to hold forth to unappreciative jurymen ! We are aware, of course, that the exigences of social life often force round men into square holes ; but, after making this deduction, how many *voluntarily* and *pig-headedly* strive to play parts on the world's stage for which they are radically unfitted. One cause would appear to be, that primitive faculty of *perversity* which lies so deep in the human breast, that faculty which so often forces us to belie our better self, to say what we *don't mean*, and to strut in borrowed plumes. Any more fatal mistake than forcing our youths into a calling for which they are unsuited, we are unable to imagine. We look around, and our sense of social fitness and propriety is jarred everywhere. We see bad lawyers who would have made good doctors, bad actors who would have been good authors, bad parsons who had been decent pedagogues, and so on, *ad infinitum*. As for the fair ones, God bless them, their mission is to wear pretty bonnets or hats, to look charming and lovable, to be the sunshine and the flowers of man's life, and not to be too

chary of their sweet lips when the petitioner can show good cause for the gratification of his request. *Strong-minded women* who *invade man's province*, had better never have been born !

SOCIAL SKETCHES—No. 5.

THE IRONY OF FATE.

WHETHER Fate, Fortuna, Chance be (as the ancients thought) that very changeable young woman who lives in the clouds, and from thence delights to plague or benefit humanity, or whether she be in truth a convenient figure or abstraction which we unconsciously employ to denote God's moral system in His government of the Universe, it is clear, at any rate, that the heading of this sketch represents a common experience. Let us, for the nonce, personify Fate—make a Goddess of her, and call her Fortune—or *Miss Fortune*, since she is to be a young lady. One of her favourite practical jokes is to inveigle us into starting for a long walk without an umbrella or overcoat, and then to bribe Jupiter Pluvius (by a kiss perhaps !) to drench us to the skin with his inexhaustible watering-pot. The rare point of the joke is that we have walked out day after day previously, armed with our gamp or gingham, only to find it a useless incumbrance !

Another of naughty Miss Fortune's tricks is to contrive our meeting with the wrong people. Those two pretty and lively girls, if we could only meet them this lovely morning, got up to the "*nines*" (or the "*tens*"—

why not ?) as we are, with our delicate tie, most becoming hat, and our best smile ! We feel *nothing* could be more *apropos* than a *rencontre* this sunny May morning. But it is not to be—Miss Fortune being a young lady herself and so jealous presumably of her own sex is determined to sell us, and thus brings us face to face with old Parson Dreary, of Dumps Rectory, or the estimable but wearisome Canon Heavysides, just in the *very* spot where we *ought* to have met those charmers with their dangerous eyes, and their tresses floating in the breeze ! We are duly buttonholed of course, for half an hour or so, and at length escape from our tormentors with rather clearer ideas than we had before on the subject of rectorial tithes, and the eschatology of the early Church. Need we say that we don't meet our syrens at all, but our whole attention is occupied in dexterously dodging garrulous old maids, and bores great and small of the male sex, each of whom rides his hobby-horse to the death. But a few mornings later, when we are feeling seedy and ill at ease, pale after a bad night, and with (oh horror !) an untrimmed moustache and unshaven chin, we almost run into the arms of the darlings whom we had devoutly hoped to avoid ! Alas ! we show to sorry advantage indeed, with cheeks as red as a beet, and a nervous shifting from one leg to the other, whilst we murmur the brilliant things that usually occur to unfortunates so situated. Flo' and Hilda flash scorn from those fine grey eyes of theirs, and leave us with the coldest of bows, and a very perceptible curl of the upper lip. And that false hussy, Miss Fortune,

all the while is laughing in her sleeve. Another of her favourite scenes is the railway-station—here she absolutely revels in her sly tricks, and from her place of vantage on high she must be royally amused at the chagrin and annoyance of her victims. Is it not a fact that when we have timed our arrival beautifully at the station, and have just five minutes to spare, the train is invariably very late—twenty minutes perhaps—and for that time we are airing our heels on the draughty platform? But when we are a minute late, up comes the “Milo” or “Excelsior,” snorting and puffing in virtuous pride at its own punctuality, and we enjoy the exquisite felicity of seeing our train steaming slowly off, whilst wedged between two stout ladies at the ticket pigeon-hole, one of whom is prodding us in the ribs with her gamp, and the other counting her change as deliberately as though she had twelve months to do it in! We were perhaps half a minute behind time, but the company *that day* had resolved on being punctual to the fraction of a second. And Miss Fortune’s blue eyes are dancing with mirth at our mortification. She is always marking us for her own when we are in a hurry. A hurried glance at our watch shows barely ten minutes to jump into our sable plumes and arrange our back parting—our fair tormentor is in her glory now, and one *contretemps* succeeds another with marvellous rapidity.—Crack! There’s the collar-button gone, and no one to sew another on! And *where*—oh where are our white chokers? Rattle! There go our shirt-studs careering over the floor, where we capture them with difficulty,

candle in hand, splashing our best front with grease, and bursting — well, never mind ! At any rate, we “cut in ” about the end of fish time, feeling and looking the picture of misery, and worst of all there’s a seat left for us next Marian Kiss-me-Quick, that lovely girl we are so far “gone on,” and would especially captivate to-night ! How calm, cool and bewitching *she* looks in her gossamer robes and creamy laces, not a fold out of place, not a glossy tress disarranged in her soft luxuriant hair ! And what a hot, flustered, flushed, red-faced specimen of humanity *we* are, with half-brushed hair, tie all awry, and coat-collar unbecomingly turned up in our rear ! We only trust Miss Fortune up in sky-land won’t break a blood-vessel (if she has any) in her hilarious mirth at our discomfort and generally “shoddy” appearance ! We must pass over some of her commonest freaks, such as upsetting our ink-bottle over a recently finished MSS., coupling us with the wrong people at dinner-parties, hiding everything from view when we most want it, and revert for a moment to the more serious side of our subject. We hinted at the outset that these *contretemps* might be an essential part of the moral discipline of the Universe—so many “thorns in the flesh” to purify and ennoble our characters. So, fair reader, when next you see an hungry mosquito exploring that white arm of yours with bloodthirsty intent, do not kill him, but regard him as a tiny agent for your advancement in goodness, and moral excellence, and treat him accordingly ! Let him banquet *ad lib.* on his snowy fare ; though his bites be sharp they are salutary, and you will have

the proud consciousness of feeling that you are ennobling your character, and sparing the life of a happy but slightly greedy insect at the same time! Think too of the compliment he has paid you! He has selected *your* fair white arm out of many others perhaps, for his mid-day meal, thus indubitably showing his appreciation of your charms! If, however, you are too *human* to take this lofty view of things and find his bites a *leetle* too sharp to be agreeable, why then—then, I pity the mosquito!!

And you lover of lasses in general, and comely ones in particular, when next you see your Clarissa coy or cold, supercilious, sarcastic or sneering, do not hate her there and then for it, and resolve to avoid her in future, but regard her as an angel in disguise, whose earthly mission is to test the true metal of your character, and so you may rise superior at last, even to the "Irony of Fate!"

POETRY :
DESCRIPTIVE AND SENTIMENTAL.



GLIMPSES OF IMMORTALITY !

PROEM.

WHAT grander theme wherewith to weave
A slender wreath of solemn song
Which may entwine some hearts that long
For light, yet dare not to believe ?

II.

As one who dallying with a rose,
Now twirls it in her fingers fair,
Now sheaths it in her silken hair,
Amid its beauty to repose,

III.

Must bear a remnant of its scent
Throughout a golden summer's day,
Though carelessly she throws away
Her plaything, when her love is spent ;

IV.

So those who turn in idle mood
To this—a Poet's latest theme—
And o'er its crude conclusions dream
Awhile in times of solitude,

V.

May from it snatch some grains of gold,
Some thoughts, which in the years to come
May strike the Doubting Devil dumb,
And make them happier than of old.

PART I.

(IN BABYHOOD.)

Within its tiny cot it lies,
This human bud anon to blow
In God's own garden here below,
And slumber seals those laughing eyes.

II.

The proud young mother bends above
Her darling babe's unbroken rest,
A tender yearning in her breast,
And in her eyes the light of love.

III.

She sees a smile all softly play,
As moonbeams tremble on the deep,
Across the features stilled in sleep,
Then sees it slowly die away !

IV.

She watches still—it comes once more—
That gleam which seems too sweet for earth,
Too holy to be born of mirth,
But caught from the eternal shore.

V.

The fair-haired mother cannot guess
The *source* of that mysterious smile,
She is content to muse awhile
In perfect self-forgetfulness !

VI.

She is not versed in psychic lore,
Her babe and husband are her crown,
No sophist she in silken gown,
A loving woman—nothing more !

VII.

She saw, and saw with calm delight
It was a passing gleam of joy
Shot o'er the features of her boy,
And so *her* bosom too was light !

H

VIII.

But she had all unconscious seen
The semblance of a mystery
For human wisdom far too high,
That cannot look behind the screen !

IX.

Impressions brought the brain by sense,
And recombined in visions fair,
Woke not that flash of joyance there
Upon the face of innocence !

X.

For, immatured the baby brain,
And crystal waters—summer skies—
Though daily mirrored in his eyes,
In *slumber* could not live again !

XI.

Far back in Time's Cimmerian night
In some dim realm—afar—unknown—
That fragile blossom may have blown
To fruitage in a purer light

XII.

Than that which laves this grosser sphere,
Wherein the flower that elsewhere died
Had found a lowlier Eastertide,—
Whose rosy dawn was held so dear !

XIII.

Bright glimpses of that long ago,
Of sunny meads,—and fairy bower,—
May come at slumber's silent hour
And move the smile that angels know !

XIV.

And if beneath another sky,
That rosebud was ordained to blow,
It may, for all that we can know,
Have bloomed from all Eternity !

XV.

And if we dare not dower the soul
With earthly *birthright*, who will dare
In this our world—however fair,
And full of song—to fix its *goal* ?

XVI.

"It cannot be !" that strange voice cries
To human hearts in every land,
"Upon an unseen brink we stand
Between two vast Eternities !"

PART II.

(CHILDHOOD.)

The flowing robes are cast away,
The patter comes of little feet,
And careless laughter clear and sweet
Makes music for us through the day !

II.

We love the fair ingenuous brow,—
The peach-like cheek is all aglow
With ruddy health—full long ago
Seems that dim cradle era now !

III.

His bonny ringlets in the breeze
Are waving fetterless and free,
His prattle fills the heart with glee,
And echoes lightly o'er the leas !

IV.

We see each day the bud expand
And some new glory in the face,
Some novel charm, some subtle grace
That makes his presence fairyland !

V.

Dear boy ! He has not dashed as yet
The gloss from Pleasure's fickle wing,
But finds delight in *everything*,
And is a stranger to regret !

VI.

He bends with lips all rosy red
Above a beaker brimming bright
With that rich vintage of delight
That streams from Nature's fountain-head !

VII.

Not yet for him that gilded bowl,
Which fair yet fading flowers entwine,
Whence worldlings drain that deadly wine
That saps the safety of the soul.

VIII.

Lips pure as *his* may tempt at first
The poisoned wine which bubbles round
That goblet's brim ; but soon have found
It *never* can appease their thirst !

IX.

Yet even Pleasure's slaves may drain
A draught from *Nature's* fountain clear,
So cool to fevered lips—so dear
To those who would be *pure* again !

X.

And if they find a taste of Heaven,
Whom Pleasure drugged with deadly sweets,
How freshly Nature's vintage meets
The rosy laughing lips of "seven !"

XI.

Then as we watch him dance and run,
The fairest thing on God's fair earth,
A bright embodiment of mirth—
Whose sunny course has just begun,

XII.

We feel there lurks within that frame
A fiery essence dimly known,
Which, when this grosser life has flown,
Shall flash into a quenchless flame !

XIII.

And as he stands in sweet surprise
Before some wonder of the morn,
Eternity begins to dawn
Within the Heaven of his eyes !

XIV.

Anon we see his raptured gaze
Strained far into the stainless blue,
As though some vision chained his view
Beyond this Planet's silvery haze !

XV.

And then we call him to our side,
And listen to the eager flow
Of winsome words that come and go,
Upon the winds of Morning-Tide !

XVI.

Those words that from his red lips pour
Awake vibrations in the air,
That travel on serenely there,—
And know no rest for evermore !

XVII.

If those vibrations *never* die
Within the Ether's boundless deep,
But ever widen, as they sweep
On through the blue immensity ;

XVIII.

The soul that gave that babble birth
Must surely soar beyond the sun
When this corporeal course is run,
And scorn the swathing-bands of earth !

PART III.

(MANHOOD.)

I.

The fragrant flower is fully blown,
The rich blood dashes thro' the frame,
His cheeks with ardour are aflame,
He feels the Universe his own !

II.

From Nature's bright refreshing stream
He drinks with ever stronger zest,
Yet wanders in a strange unrest
Through dell and dingle in a dream.

III.

Though every fairy sound and sight
Awakes an echo in his soul,
Still, sadness plays the spoiler's *rôle*,
And breaks the spell of his delight.

IV.

The wild bird's full entrancing strain
Is ever wedded to regret,
And shadows waxing darker yet,
Obscure the chambers of his brain.

V.

Delicious as that song may be,
No joy untainted will it bring,
And Fancy sails on idle wing
O'er speculation's troubled sea !

VI.

She whispers in the dreamer's ear
That far beyond yon crimsoned west
Some twilight realm of perfect rest
Wrapped in a purer atmosphere

VII.

May lie beneath the seething foam
Of Ocean's wild distempered sway,
Where Time and Space are cast away
And man may haply find his home !

VIII.

When birds may warble in the palm
And rills may tinkle at our feet,
Yet song and tinkle be so sweet,
They shall intensify the calm.

IX.

For *here* we feel the sadness *most*,
When softest songs the ears invade,
Poured through the leafy greenwood glade,
By the enamoured feathered host.

X.

The fairer that the landscape be
Which grows into the gazer's eyes,
The sadder are the thoughts that rise
Within the gazer's phantasy !

XI.

A sense of something incomplete—
A yearning for the dim unknown—
Will push Enjoyment from her throne
And mingle bitter with the sweet.

XII.

And more—*some* scene familiar seems—
Its features breathe of days gone by,
Ne'er seen before *beneath the sky*,—
Can they have lit the *land of dreams* ?

XIII.

Yet dreams, however fair and bright,
Are *sense impressions* recombined,—
The golden key is hard to find,
For God has hidden it from sight.

XIV.

A pre-existence in the past,
Amid surroundings that we know,
May on the gloom a *glimmer* throw,
But man is baffled to the last !

PART IV.

(OLD AGE.)

The head is bent, the gait is slow,
The hair is silver sprinkled now,
Pale sorrow's seal is on the brow,
Life takes its light from long ago !

II.

Fled has the pristine bloom for aye,
The worn wan worldling wanes apace,
Death presses on to win the race,
And reap the harvest when he may !

III.

The crimson blood that glanced of yore
Through all the winding veins of blue,
Doth now a feebler course pursue,
A stream whose strength is nearly o'er !

IV.

Enjoyment's keen and eager zest
That hailed new beauties as they rose
With all the joy that manhood knows,
Has dwindled to a spark, at best !

V.

And though that sea of sylvan song
Still rolls its music on the ear
Of sense—as rhythmically clear
As in the days when hope was strong,

VI.

And though in Nature's magic bowl
The vintage sparkles as of eld,
That cup in palsied fingers held,
Is fraught with sadness to the soul !

VII.

For ever, melancholy broods
O'er flow'ry field and lonely lea,
And tints in more or less degree,
Fair Nature's ever changing moods.

VIII.

The *man* has played his chequered part
Upon the world's mysterious stage,
And *now* the chilling calm of age
Makes deep stagnation in his heart.

IX.

But just as life's expiring flame
Begins to flicker ere it dies,
To only leave dead darkened eyes
Within the cold corporeal frame,

X.

The *inner life* God lends to light
The tameless soul, will brightly burn,
Within its broken crumbling urn,
As day springs radiant out of night.

XI.

And as below the hills of Time
Life's setting sun dips lower yet,
He *feels* "the fever and the fret"
May fade in some serener clime !

XII.

Whilst more and more he closely clings
To that fond *hope*—if nothing more,
That *he* may rise, his journey o'er,
From earth, upon immortal wings !

XIII.

The hopes and fears of earthly birth,
That chained his soul in earlier days,
Now drift into oblivion's haze,
And pass with all the things of earth.

XIV.

He feels as one who nears the close
Of some confused distorted dream,
And seems to see the distant gleam
Of morning with its streaks of rose !

XV.

And when the silver cord at length
Is loosened, and the golden bowl
Is broken, will the deathless soul
Soar far, rejoicing in its strength !

XVI.

Oft, as it flashes from the clay,
Bright visions break upon his eyes,
Of angel faces—summer skies—
The “Regions of Eternal Day !”

THE VOICES OF NATURE.

I.

I STAND upon the border-land
’Twixt garish youth, and sober age,
No longer rash, yet scarcely sage,
And yearning for a guiding hand

II.

To plumb the depths of this my brain,
And pointing to a narrow way,
To bid me track it night and day,
And forthwith cease to live in vain !

III.

For one who knows no mundane cares,
And lacks no purpose in his breast,
The tricky demon called "Unrest,"
Will lay a thousand specious snares !

IV.

And so with me—my talents lend
Themselves to countless petty aims,—
And yet a voice within me claims
To know, "How will I meet the end?"

V.

I hear the music of the sea,
It steals upon the ear from far,
And many a mystic listening star
Is whispering of the life to be !

VI.

When God shall wipe all tears away,
When aching hearts shall be at rest,
And only sunshine flood the breast
Which beateth in that perfect day.

VII.

But in the pauses of the roar,
A distant murmuring is heard,—
Again my restless soul is stirred
By that dread question asked before !

VIII.

And then I say below my breath,
"There is no bird that beats the air
With aimless wing—Oh ! do thy share,
Or life will be a living Death !"

IX.

Then as I dash away the tear
That starts unbidden to the eye,
I think of those I love—and sigh,
And vow to strengthen with the year !

X.

And I have cause to strive and fret,
For as in thought, I wander back
Along the dead year's misty track,
I see what I would fain forget.

XI.

I do not look upon the man
Who mused upon the cliffs to-day,
And in a weak half-hearted way,
Still dissipates his little span.

XII.

I see a Being imperfect still,
But one who wrestled with his foe—
That sloth which sought to lay him low—
And slew temptation with his will.

XIII.

And then, as I emerge again
From tangled labyrinths of the past,
Upon to-day I look aghast,
And feel I surely live in vain !

XIV.

Light, light, once more ! And into air
Dissolve those visions sombre-hued ;
My soul with keener strength imbued,
Disdains to dally with despair !

XV.

To-day I looked upon the deep,
Without a furrow on its breast,
And like a spell—its perfect rest
Lulled all my stormier thoughts to sleep.

XVI.

For all was joy, around, above,
The swallow pierced the liquid blue,
The linnet singing, round me flew,
And every flower breathed of Love.

XVII.

I musing said, " He is sublime !
If this our earthly home's so bright,
On ! on ! till in that perfect light,
Thou standest by the tomb of Time."

XVIII.

When I shall see with clearer eyes,
Than those which now would vainly peer
Beyond our narrow circle here,
Into his solemn mysteries.

XIX.

When on the ear shall steal once more
That voice Death silenced in the past,
To bid me welcome home at last—
To that unseen mysterious shore,—

XX.

Where faith for aye is lost in sight,
And through that happy morning land
We both shall wander hand in hand,
Through dazzling avenues of light !

XXI.

My soul drinks in the stainless blue,
That lives in yonder summer sky
With deep delight, until my eye
Is sated with the changeless hue.

XXII.

When lo ! Across the vaulted floor,
A train of dusky cloudlets sweep,
The winds awaken from their sleep,
And angry gusts begin to roar.

XXIII.

So o'er the ocean of my mind,
That in a calm unbroken lay,
The darkest doubts will often play,
And Faith departing, leave me blind.

XXIV.

And then I murmur "*Is it so?*
Is there another life than this?"
We bask in dreams of endless bliss,
But ruthless Reason whispers "*No!*"

XXV.

But when the garish daylight fled,
I look above, and plainly trace
His writing in the starry space,
And muse in silence on the dead!

XXVI.

My spirit beats those fancied bars
With angry wings; I see again
A token in the moon-lit main,
And in the beauty of the stars,

XXVII.

That *here* we cannot wholly rest,
When "night rounds off our little day,"
His angels call our souls away
To some far region in the west.

XXVIII.

Then Reason totters on her throne,
And Faith's star rising thro' the gloom
Upon that shore beyond the tomb,
Proclaims Eternity my own !

XXIX.

To breathe the same ambrosial air
As angels, and to wing the sky
Above a sea of melody,
Without the shadow of a care !

XXX.

To hear the choral stars sublime
Sing o'er a ransomed universe,—
To feel the first primeval curse
Has perished with the tyrant Time !

XXXI.

Oh ! tried and troubled mortal, say,
If thus, in dying, thou art blest,
Is there no *yearning* in thy breast
To plume thy pinions, and away ?

XXXII.

Art thou so confident, my soul,
That all thy task is nobly done,
That ere has set another sun
Thou would'st attain the final goal ?

XXXIII.

And would'st thou pass unto thy rest,
And tempt that sea without a shore,
Whose breakers sing "No more ! No more !"
Without one qualm within thy breast ?

XXXIV.

Without one qualm, or any fears
Lest in thy looked-for Paradise,
The spectral hours should sadly rise,
From the dark graves of buried years ?

XXXV.

To chide thee for thy wasted prime,
When golden minutes swiftly fled
Unheeded, though a warning dread
Pealed from the iron throat of Time.

XXXVI.

Oh ! were it not sublimer far,
These pleasant dreams awhile to cease,—
And not to idly whisper "Peace,"
While all around is rife with war ?

XXXVII.

He wants thee *here* a little space,
To pour on Sorrow's troubled sea
From that cruise He has filled for thee,
A little oil ; then veil thy face !

XXXVIII.

Are there no secrets in the gale
That softly sways the golden grain,
Which thou hast tried to read in vain
When twilight broodeth o'er the vale?

XXXIX.

Dost know what yonder grey rocks say,
That ever lean across the stream?
Or what the sleeping birds may dream
Through many a drowsy summer's day?

XL.

Or hast thou ever laid thine ear
Beside the foxglove's dappled bell,
When west winds whisper thro' its cell,
And was the murmured message clear?

XLI.

There is a meaning buried deep
In that sweet sea of sylvan song—
Thou *mayest* fathom it ere long—
The birds, as *yet*, their secret keep!

XLII.

Each moss and fern—each subtle phase
Of Nature's moods from spring to spring—
May typify some fairer thing
In worlds now hidden from the gaze!

XLIII.

And as I hear the weird winds roll
Through woodland ways at vesper dim
Or listen to the birds' last hymn,
I feel their echo in my soul.

XLIV.

A thousand voices to me call
From yonder distant purple hills,
I muse o'er flowers—rocks—and rills,
Some meaning underlies them all.

XLV.

If *here* we kneel at Nature's shrine,
And thus with reverential eyes
Seek to unveil her mysteries,
And read her marvels line by line !

XLVI.

Though baffled wheresoe'er we turn,
The task each day will dearer grow ;
The truest wisdom is to know
That we have countless things to learn !

XLVII.

And ever and anon will light
From Heaven fall upon the mind,
As, hour by hour, we haply find
Some new star breaking through the night

XLVIII.

Some meaning in the drop of dew
That flashes in the morning sun,
And in the ivied wreaths that run
About the sad funereal yew.

XLIX.

And thus as slowly we draw near
Our narrow home—the last long sleep,
How sweet to feel that we shall reap
Above, the grain we planted here !

L.

Yet we may wander in the dale,
From flower to flower, from tree to tree,
A long life through, and never see
A beam far glimmering through the veil.

LI.

May feel, as summer evenings die,
The amorous zephyr's gentle kiss
Upon our cheek, yet ever miss
The *meaning* hidden in its sigh !

LII.

May see the loosestrife's spires swing
Like censers, in the scented air,
Yet fail—though haply charmed—to share
In that sweet message which they bring !

LIII.

And yearnings deep will rack the breast
Of him who lingers by the rill,
Who threads the maze or climbs the hill,
In doubtful dreams, and strange unrest—

LIV.

Unrest—because he feels that each
Fair fretted fern, and mossy stone,
Has some rare language of its own,
Could he but understand its speech !

LV.

And it indeed would seem the doom
Of many an ardent soul to stray
Alone through winding woodland way,
And trackless labyrinths of bloom.

LVI.

To haunt the waning woods at eve,
When on them falls a cool, deep rest,
To watch day dying in the west,
And hear the fluttering breezes grieve

LVII.

Without an inkling in the brain
Of all the mighty truths they tell,
And in the heart is born a hell
To feel they speak to us in vain !

LVIII.

Time pauses in his course to-night,
And ere his chariot onwards roll,
Through the dim past, my restless soul,
Shall wing her solitary flight.

LIX.

A phantom herald, dark and dread,
She leads me back through vanished years,
Through shadowy valleys wet with tears,
And sad with memories of the dead !

LX.

To regions where a purer air
Is dallying with remembered trees,
And clouds of visionary bees
Steal honey from the flowers that were !

LXI.

Where once I roved, and felt no thrill
Of wonder, as I brushed the dew,
In showers, from the speedwell's blue,
Or climbed the gorse-illuminated hill.

LXII.

When I would peer with careless eyes
Into each fairy coloured cell,
And never deem that it could tell
A tale all fraught with mysteries

LXIII.

The old year's sands are nearly run,
And all those voices strange and low,
That murmured on, through shine and snow,
At last, are blending into *one* !

LXIV.

Aye, all the myriad tongues that cry
For ever to a heedless throng,
Are hushed before angelic song
That wakes the silence of the sky !

LXV.

The waning year will soon depart
Upon Earth's breast the snow lies deep,
And muffles—through her solemn sleep,
The strong pulsations of her heart !

LXVI.

Again, we welcome, high and low,
Our ancient guest, whose hoary head
Is wreathed with berries blushing red,
And many a spray of mistletoe.

LXVII.

His frozen blood, like fire shall run,
Anon, through all his withered veins,
Thawed by the wassail bowls he drains
Throughout the breadth of Christendom !

LXVIII.

And we will pledge him, ere he dies,
In brimming bumpers, three times three,
Whilst bells ring out o'er vale and lea,
Their message to the midnight skies !

LXIX.

Where'er a British bosom swells,
In torrid climes—on ocean drear—
Will softly steal on fancy's ear
The echoes of those Christmas bells !

LXX.

Now *Love* her banner has unfurled,
And down the avenues of Time
Far floating, come those strains sublime,
Once sung by angels to the world !

LXXI.

But yet through all the hallowed rest
Of Christmas eve, when from the wall
The berries wink in cot and hall,
A longing lingers in my breast !

LXXII.

A yearning for the golden key
To all those undertones I love,
That soon again my soul will move,
With murmurs of the mystery !

LXXIII.

Now in a vision of the night,
When from its prison-house of clay
My spirit soared a little way,
I read those mystic tones aright.

LXXIV.

The rill that sparkled in the sun,
And lashed the boulders on its way,
Bid me press onward while the day
Still lingered—till the goal was won !

LXXV.

But that same brooklet as it swept
In silence past the flag and fern,
With many a curve and stately turn—
Yet still its breast unruffled kept—

LXXVI.

Spoke in a yet sublimer strain,
And whispered that the time would come,
When wearied voices might be dumb,
And we might steal repose again !

LXXVII.

Then as its waters paused to kiss
The bending flowers here and there,
As though in eagerness to share
With them its argosy of bliss—

LXXVIII.

It told me gently as a psalm,
Whilst *my* calm days sped smoothly by,
To pause and wipe the tearful eye,
And scatter broadcast Pity's balm !

LXXIX.

The breeze that fluttered to and fro,
Amid the leaves at vesper dim,
Breathed but the echoes of a hymn
By angels chanted soft and low.

LXXX.

But when in darkness overhead,
That wind wailed through imagined bloom,
I knew that Nature, in the gloom,
Sang funeral dirges for the dead !

LXXXI.

The restless golden-belted bees
That hummed serenely through the air,
Discreetly gathering here and there
Delicious sweets from flowery leas !

LXXXII.

Were typical, my spirit said,
Of that mysterious ceaseless hum
Of men who ever go and come,
In crowded streets, with rapid tread—

LXXXIII.

And as those bees from full-blown May
The cool and luscious honey drain,
So too, these eager men would fain
Sip Pleasure's potion on their way !

LXXXIV.

Anon my soul was hovering near
The margin of a bubbling beck,
Whose shore marsh marigolds did deck ;
Where gleamed the loosestrife's purple spear.

LXXXV.

Behind, a forest barred the way,
So near, that violets white and blue,
Which on its mossy border grew,
Were often drenched with silver spray

LXXXVI.

From some white waterfall that sung
For ever to the burning bloom
Of celandine, and golden broom,—
A song of eld, yet ever young !

LXXXVII.

And glancing through the boughs above,
The sun-shafts through the bars of green
Shone softly on the happy scene,
Whilst cushats cooed their tale of love !

LXXXVIII.

Thus, Truth's serene and lustrous ray
Through Error's dusky web, at last
Will surely break, and scatter fast
The lying barriers in its way !

IN THE OLDEN TIME.

I AM not all I was in days gone by !
You say this dull corporeal frame of mine
Has been transmuted surely, noiselessly,
In the mysterious crucible of time,
Till not one particle is left of those
Which helped to form it seven years ago,
Swelling to-day the beauty of some rose
Or shrined in yonder hawthorn—who can know ?
It is too true—*this* blue-veined nervous hand,
Pen poising in an ecstasy of thought,
Is *not* the one, which in a fairer land,
In earlier years, intuitively wrought
The silent mandates of the busy brain ;—
But what of this ? Some priceless gem may rest
For years within a casket, then again
White hands consign it to another nest,
The first resembling, but still not the same,
The husk which hid the jewel—*that* alone
Is changed—the peerless diamond will flame,
And flash, and dazzle on—the pristine stone !

Thus with the spirit—though its earthly cell
 Be changed, the pure atomic being is far
 Beyond the spoiler's dread corroding spell,
 And ever shines like some eternal star
 From its allotted windows ; as I gaze
 Upon yon mirror's face, a glance is flung
 Back to these eyes of mine—and buried days
 Like phantoms rise—the days when I was young!—
 Thus, though the never-dying soul has found
 Another prison-house, the *man* who stood
 In distant days upon enchanted ground
 Girt by the deep blue ocean's restless flood,
 Is he, within whose brain is surging fast
 A host of memories that waft him now
 Along the shadowy vistas of the past,
 Deep'ning the lines of thought upon his brow!
 But I was purer *then* than *now* I wot,
 And meeter far to live beneath those skies
 From whose all matchless tints my soul had caught
 A hue that made my home a Paradise!
 My music then the ocean's murmuring,
 My very day-dreams sweeter far than those
 That came to me in sleep ; for then no sting
 Of conscience marred my exquisite repose !

Was it in Heaven, or was it on Earth,
 Where long, long years ago,
 We saw together the fair day's birth,
 And the first faint eastern glow?
 Was it, in sooth, a living bird,

Or the chorister of a dream,
 Who sang where the quivering aspen stirred
 On the marge of a saucy stream ?
 Was it a spirit who whispered to me
 In the hush of the summer night,
 Or was it a maiden whose purity
 Shamed even the lily white ?
 It matters not, I a little reck,
 Alas, in this far off time,
 Of the verity of that blithesome beck,
 And its clear melodious chime !
 It still may flash at its own wild will,
 Or wind through a mythic land,
 Enough that its silvery treble still
 Is linked with a " vanished hand ! "
 Whether in truth we wandered there
 In the golden dawn of love,
 To bathe in the cool and the unsunned air,
 In the home of the blue winged dove ;
 Or whether in *spirit* we threaded then
 Dim regions beyond the sun,
 That only lie in a dreamer's ken,
 When the daylight's course is run ;
 So far that time that I scarcely know,
 The pictures, that somewhere rest,
 In Memory's halls, of that long ago,
 Are shadowy, at the best.

But as some seer o'er a crystal's face,
 In a darkened room will bend,

K

And seek in the glassy depths to trace
 The form of a long lost friend ;
 So let me silently sometime gaze,
 In Memory's mystic well,
 To woo a vision of vanished days,
 And the tender tale they tell.—
 All blurred at first, for the mists of years
 Move sullenly to and fro
 O'er the crystal depths ; not a gleam appears
 From the fairy realm below !
 Till lo ! a break in the veil at last
 As the mists begin to rise,
 And a happy scene of the happy past,
 Breaks slowly on my eyes !
 In a cottage chamber growing dim
 As the twilight stealeth on,
 A lady looks to the western rim
 Of the hills, where the day has gone !
 It is my love (who is *ever mine* !)
 • In her favourite oaken chair,
 She toys with the purple columbine,
 There are wind-flowers in her hair !—
 That chair is wreathed with the woodbine won
 Where the wild bees love to roam,
 Above her tresses the tendrils run,
 As though in their leafy home !
 Fair flowers azure and white, and red,
 From her soft grasp slowly slide—
 (Thrice happy flowers !) to find a bed
 On the lap of my bonny bride !

And there all dewy and bright they rest
On her robe of virgin white,
Whilst the scent that breathes where the blithe birds nest
Is haunting the summer night !
And I, as I bend o'er the musing maid,
Feel her rippling ringlets blown
O'er my sunburnt cheek, which is lightly laid
To the loveliness of her own !

But as when bells are pealing
At dewy close of day,
Whose minstrelsy is stealing
Our truant thoughts away,
On zephyrs perfume laden
The sweet sounds float from far,
And waft us to that Aidenn
Where our lost ones are,
So Memory's breath is crisping
The Mind's unruffled sea,
And its wavelets now are lispings
Of the glories gone from me !

Lo ! now the Spirit of the past appears,
And slowly doth unroll
The dusty records of the vanished years,
Like some fair pictured scroll !
No more *alone* that scene at eventide,
So dim, so calmly fair,
With quaint old oaken chair and happy bride,
And flower-woven hair ;

But every glance from those resistless eyes
 That found a home in mine—
 And every bower of that paradise
 Where I would oft entwine
 Her dainty waist, whilst through the leafy screen
 The birds flashed to and fro—
 All, all, once more, I trow, are clearly seen,
To-day is long ago !

And each sweet word that from her red lips fell
 Like roses dropping dew,
 Again I hear—ah, hear alas ! too well !
 Though they are all too few !
 So ere yon storm-clouds gathering dark and dread,
 Above the sad to-day,
 Shall shroud these tender memories of the dead,
 I'll woo them while I may !

We dwelt in a home that was calm and quiet,
 Hidden away like some secret nest,
 Out of the region of restless riot,
 In the dusky dells of the pleasant West.
 The twitter of birds, and the first faint flutter
 Of early winds through the woodlands grey,
 Were ever the voices first to utter
 A welcome back to the glad young day !

The moorland bare in its stern wild glory
 Skirted the edge of a smiling land,
 And the ancient Tors in their vestment hoary
 Of rolling mists, towered darkly grand !

Beneath us, the rapt gaze wandered over
Fair Plenty's paradise lapped in peace,
Yellowing corn fields, and realms of clover,
Canopied softly with clouds of fleece !

Our cosy cot was a rose-girt bower
In a garden of greenery bravely set,
Where the silvery shafts of the summer shower
Pattered on pansy and mignonette ;
Sheltered alike from the Frost King's ire,
And the biting blasts of the upland drear,
We bent o'er the beauties that glowed like fire,
Or echoed the sky tints—all the year !

Never a ripple disturbed the ocean
In which our blithe bark anchored lay,
Never a pang, or a sad emotion
Clouded the days as they slid away !—
Never a voice or a step unbidden
From the world around us to break the spell
That hung o'er the haven in which were hidden
Two loving hearts in that Devon dell !—

And though the snow-time is charming
In its own rough boisterous way,
When the oaks and the beeches are arming
Amain, as for some fierce fray !
When the icicles deck them proudly,
Like glittering coat of mail,
And the war notes are echoing loudly
Through many a dreary dale !—

Though lovers may tread together
 The beautiful realm of snow,
 And win from the winter weather
 A healthful becoming glow !
 And though in the bright home-fire
 Fresh faces they find each night,
 When the tempests are rising higher,
 And shrieking in wild delight,
 For my memories, *summer's hours*
 Of softness are far more meet,
 And the fluttering leaves of the bowers,
 Where roses make love more sweet !

And more I am clearly *bidden*
 To dip where the *fair* days shine
 From that well, where they all lie hidden
 In this foolish old heart of mine !—
 For never the blue of Heaven
 Was veiled by the virgin snow,
 In that dear little dell of Devon
 Where we loved in the long ago !—

Who knows not the Heavenly hush
 That hallows this earth so fair,
 As we greet the first exquisite flush
 From the sun-god's rosy lair ?
 When the bird still nods in his nest,
 And the woodlands are dim and grey,
 And the whispering winds of the West
 Are kissing each dewy spray !—

From the joyaunce of happy dreams
We arose at this holy time
When the cheek of the glowing rose
Was touched with the early rime.
'Twas then with a silent prayer
On the lips, that we softly trod
That paradise dim and fair
Alone with the birds and God !

And we felt, as we onwards strayed
Through solitudes half awake,
Down the shadowy silent glade,
Through the sinuous tangled brake :
A touch of that old world calm
Which they might have felt of yore
Who watched neath the graceful palm
The sunrise on Eden's shore !—

So deep was the rapt repose
That mantled this orb of ours,
Ere the fiery monarch rose
From his slumber in Eastern bowers,
That *we* might have stood *alone*
On earth, 'neath the cold grey sky
With the mountains for our throne,
And the winds for our minstrelsy !

We saw the cold mists rise
From hollows dim and grey,
With wistful eager eyes
We watched them float away

Like phantoms fraught with death
 To all that's fair and bright,
 Whose dank and chilling breath
 Spreads universal blight.

Reluctantly they sail,
 Dissolving, as they go,
 Across the quiet vale
 That nestles far below,
 'Till to the sun-god's ire
 Their waning strength being given,
 Before his shafts of fire
 They fly—dispersed and riven !
 And beauty, in her strength,
 Leapt conquering from the tomb,
 As day emerged at length
 From night's mysterious womb !

How fair the sylvan scene that met the view !
 I seem to see it still !
 To hear again the cushat's plaintive coo,
 The ripple of the rill.
 Again the distant spire cleaves the sky,
 As showing us the way,
 Again I hear the tufted plovers cry
 From moorlands wild and grey !

The leafy dell that slumbered at our feet,
 The home for ever fair
 Of many a floral treasure fresh and sweet
 That only blossom there !

The sunny slopes upon the further side
With burning broom aglow
Where many a burnished insect in its pride
Flashed gaily to and fro !

The sportive swift careering far above
Upon his sable wing,
The gentle turtle making low-voiced love,
The lark's clear carolling !
The Mavis fluting softly from his bower
Of leaves, and bramble rose,
The pert daw wheeling round the ivied tower
Invading its repose !

All these and more are pictured in my mind,
As we two saw them then,
Swept by a silver-footed western wind
That whispered down the glen !
All these the fairer for their lengthened spell
Of slumber, through the night ;
A rarer fragrance from the dewy dell,
The countless hues more bright !
A deeper glory shining far and nigh
Upon the landscape's face,
As though anew from their Creator's die,
His works illumined space.

Then homewards ere Apollo
Should blind us with his beams,
Through many a cool deep hollow,
Where pensive silence dreams,

Through music-haunted bowers,
 Across the gleaming grass,
 In those fair morning hours,
 We rapturously pass !

Passed homewards to the dwelling,
 Where moaned the cushat dove,
 Our twin hearts fairly swelling
 With all their weight of love !

What a change from the glare and the heat,
 Was the twilight that met us there,
 As we sought our dim retreat,
 With the flower-wreathed oaken chair !
 Where the air was for ever dense
 With the sweets from a wealth of bloom,
 That sickened the sated sense,
 And fastened the eyelids soon !
 Whilst ever the drowsy hum
 Of the velvety toilers fell
 On the ear, as they go and come,
 From the fiery tulip's well,—

Where often the soft low note
 Of the bird, as he wooed his love,
 On the dallying airs would float
 From the heart of the firry grove ;
 And borne through the lattice dear,
 Flung back for the scent and shine,
 Would melt on the perfect ear,
 That nestled so close to mine !

And oh, it was meet, we thought,
That the feathered gallants should woo,
In their bower, of roses wrought,
Where never a beam broke through !—
Whilst *we*, as we sat apart,
From the glance of the garish day,
Were opening heart to heart,
And kissing the hours away !

But the gloom of the room was soft, and seductive, and
sweet,
And the sheen of your een made all that we cared for of
light,
Our rest was so blest after all the sun's glamour and heat,
That we were, sitting there, in a rarer and lovelier
night,
Dreaming dreams of delight.

And the song rich and strong of the merle in the
blossoming thorn
Floated clear on the ear, and made for us music
divine,
Whilst the wind, gay and kind, and fresh with the breath
of the morn,
In its bliss came to kiss those ravishing tresses of thine,
That I loved to call mine.

Even now though my brow is seamed with the foot-
 prints of Time,
 Who has shed on my head his wreath of invincible snows,
 How my cheek wan and weak will flush with a radiance
 divine,
 As I seem in a dream to be once more caressing my
 Rose,

In that twilight repose.

But her sleep it is deep, where only the sough of the wind
 Seems to toll for the soul that was summoned so soon to
 its rest.

God above in his love will beckon the one left behind ;
 By the side of my bride I shall lie in that dell of the
 West,

In a year at the best.

When from reverie we awaken,
 To trial and tears once more,
 From the swift wings of thought are shaken,
 The dews of a mythic shore—
 So we, in that quiet bower,
 Forbidden to rest for aye,
 Might dream for a happy hour,
 The waking must come some day !

As a Dryad of classic story
 Might steal from her forest lair,
 When the sun in his perfect glory
 Was beating upon her hair,
 So you, with your young cheeks glowing,
 And eyes shaming Heaven's blue,

And your aureate tresses flowing,
Would rise from *your* day dreams too !

The spoils of woodland bowers
Would claim your earliest care,
Those freshly gathered flowers,
Upon the table there !
And soon within the crystal clear,
That wealth of dewy bloom,
Its sheen toned with green,
Would beautify the room—
Would scatter fragrance far and wide,
And beautify the room.

The orchis and the pansy,
The loosestrife's purple spire,
The hyacinth and tansy,
The "cup" that "shines like fire,"
The daffodil's pure lustre,
The speedwell's perfect blue,
With a spray of pink may,
Stole softly into view—
All told a tale of hill and dale,
And charmed the sight anew.

Then o'er this ordered beauty,
My love awhile would muse,
Intent upon her duty,
Of harmonizing hues,
And as her eager scruting
Detected nought amiss,

She would glide to my side,
 For the guerdon of a kiss,
 Would lay her bonny cheek to mine,
 For my approving kiss !

* * * * *

Long withered are those flowers ;
 The icy north winds blow,
 And those deep summer bowers
 Alas ! are veiled in snow.
 The hands that fluttered 'mid the blooms,
 For ever are at rest,
 For Death, with his breath,
 Chilled the blossom I loved best,—
 For envious Death has called her home
 Beyond the crimson West !

Soul ! why turnest thou so sadly,
 To wild winds, and leaden skies,
 When thou shouldest guide me gladly,
 Through that whilom Paradise ?
 Lingering in those bowers olden,
 Swept by zephyrs from the West?
 'Neath thy wings I would be folden,
 In a dream of perfect rest !
 For a little dost thou dally,
 Poised in thought's remotest sky,
 Looking on that quiet valley,
 Where we dwelt, my love and I !
 Looking down on shadows sleeping,
 In the hollows of the hills,

Where the fretted ferns are keeping
Gentle vigil by the rills !

Turning then on sudden pinions,
From these scenes, so calmly fair,
Leaving Dreamland's dear dominions,
For the desert of Despair,
Through a region tempest riven
Wingest thou thy lonely flight,
Drifting here and there, till driven,
On the sable realm of night.
I must follow ! I must follow !
Far from Fairy Land, ah me !
Far from music-haunted hollow,
Far from sunny summer sea !
Till we have explored together,
All the interval of years,—
Safely braved the wild wet weather,
But to be baptized in tears !

For our journey *ever* endeth,
In a quiet churchyard's gloom,
Where a single willow bendeth,
O'er a solitary tomb !
Ever endeth here, where only
Yews loom darkly overhead,
Doomed to keep their watches lonely,
O'er the slumber of the dead !
Soul ! I know they brought her hither,
Sleeping sweetly, long ago,

Ere the leaves began to wither,
In the soft September glow.
But I cannot—cannot—wake her,
So in vain the solemn quest,
In the mansions of her Maker,
She has found eternal rest !

But I left her pressing,
Red lips to my own,
Coaxingly caressing,
Locks now grizzled grown !
Left her twining rosy
Remnants in my hair,
Pilfered from the posy,
That had been her care,
On my shoulder leaning,
In her simple guise,
Pleading in the meaning
Language of the eyes.

Then my bonny burden,
Nestled closer yet,
As her wonted guerdon
On her lips was set !
Of it I had wronged her,
Slyly, for a space,
But to look the longer
On her upturned face !
Then as I would shower,
On the coral twins,

Far the sweetest dower
That a maiden wins,
Ere she had arisen,
Blinded by this rain
From its rosy prison,
Music broke again !
Broke in words of rapture,
Tripping from her tongue,
Accents that would capture,
Hearts no longer young !

Then tossing back her tawny hair
From her serene young brow,
She slowly sought a quaint old chair
(It stands deserted now),
And drawing forth an ample sheet
Of softly tinted hue,
The brushes, for her labors meet,
And glowing colours too !
The slender fingers soon would trace
Grey rock, or moorland stream,
And as I watched her perfect face,
And saw her white hands gleam,
I guessed—indeed ! I *knew* full well,
How fair the end would be,
And how her pencil's subtle spell
Would soon unlock for me
Again the silence of the glade
Where tall ferns dwell apart,

L

The vision of the beck, that played
Deep in the forest's heart !
And well I guessed the beauty rare,
That made her brow its throne,
Would pass into the picture there
And stamp it as her own !
At last the trim brushes
Are all tossed aside,
Her lovely cheek flushes
With shame—not with pride !
For shame that her picture
“ Lacked *verve*, and looked dead,”
And many a stricture
She launched at its head !
Betwixt her fair fingers,
She holds it a space,
And over it lingers,
A cloud on her face !
Then pushing her tresses
Away, in her haste,
Those shimmering tresses
That reached to her waist,
She laughs, ah ! how sweetly,
And springs from her seat,
Then trips, ah ! how featly,
Towards my retreat.
She clasps her creation,
She holds it in air,
In mute expectation,
I glance at my fair !

The *wrong* side the fairy
Displays to my eye,
And she is so wary
And holds it so high,
That though I manoeuvre
For one little peep,
If only to prove her
Own judgment asleep,
My tactics all vainly
Are brought into play,
My love tells me plainly
"No vision to-day!"
"No matter," I mutter,
And turn from my bride,
Who sinks in a flutter
Of tears, by my side!
Still closer I press her
Fair form to my breast,
I gently caress her,
And say "'Twas a jest!"
Then as the sun's splendour
Will rapidly drain
The rivulet slender,
That murmurs in vain,
So in that glad hour,
Her smile's sunny glow,
Absorbs the bright shower
Of tears, in their flow!
Their channel, thank Heaven,
Is stainless once more,

And we of all Devon,
 Most blest, as of yore !
 Then as on my shoulder
 She rests in a dream,
 I praise her "grey boulder,"
 The sweep of her stream !
 I prove in her plover,
 There's nothing amiss,
 And sign, like a lover,
 My "notes" with a *kiss* !

Then o'er the same book we would bend in the fashion
 of lovers,
 My whitening locks lying close to her aureate tresses,
 Now tracking the path of those daring knights errant
 of Spenser,
 Or musing awhile o'er the manifold charms of Bel-
 phœbe,
 Next riding, in thought, from the door of the Hostel at
 Southwark,
 And hanging entranced on the marvellous tales of the
 Pilgrims,
 Then treading with awe in the venturous footsteps of
 Dante,
 And shuddering low at the horrors that haunt the
 Inferno !
 Perhaps revelling long in the glorious pages of Shake-
 speare,
 And living anew in the midst of his subtle creations—

Bewailing with Lear the strange hardness of heart of
his daughters,
Or seeking to prove the mysterious madness of Hamlet,
Alone with Macbeth in the gloom of the turreted
chamber,
Or watching the Moor as he slaughters the wife of his
bosom.

Then leaving at last the exciting domains of the drama,
A calm sweet and deep would enchain our fluttering
spirits
As we wandered in thought in a shadowy garden of Eden,
Ay, roved there alone, as we had in the cool of the
morning,
Then, fancy *alone* did exclude Time and Space for a
season—
Now, from them we sped on the deathless winged words
of the poet !

Next, turning to fiction, we skimmed the delectable pages
Of Eliot, and laughed at the wit of the feminine Poyser,
Now dropping a tear at the many misfortunes of Adam,
Now pitying much the misguided and beautiful Hetty !
We followed Jane Eyre in her flight o'er the desolate
moorland,
And shared in *her* joy, when again in the arms of her
lover.
We sped with John Ridd up the glen to the cottage of
Lorna,
And both felt a pang at the fate of the terrible Carver !

In a word, cheek to cheek, and reclining so close to each other,
We could feel the heart-beats keeping time with the clock on the mantel,
Did we glide through the meads, and the flowery forest of fiction,
And culled choicest bits from the mystical lore of the sages,
Rattling fast o'er those "*Stones*" that John Ruskin discovered in Venice,
And puzzling awhile o'er the wisdom of Sartor Resartus !

Thus fiction—philosophy—poetry helped to enchant us,
Though oft our eyes played the truant and stole from the volume,
To meet in a look, that was fraught with a rapture unspoken,
Whilst e're and anon music burst from the lips of my loved one,
In a clear ringing laugh, or the tones of an eager inquiry.
And so the day waned in that quiet and shadowy bower,
And slantwise the rays of the summer sun streamed thro' the casement !

Then we wandered away—
Away from our rose-girt home,
As the fiery god of day,
Descended the deep blue dome.

The evening air was fresh and sweet,
And flowers were blushing at our feet,
A thrush sang well from her dim retreat—
Fit hour for musing man and maid,
When half the garden was hidden in shade,
And zephyrs thro' the tree-tops played !
Vagabond zephyrs now sailing by
The cruel rose with a love-lorn sigh,
As knowing well that she loved *them* not,
That glowing queen of the garden plot,
But kept her charms for a fairer guest,
The wind that blows full from the purple West,
When, in the silence all things rest !
Zephyrs there were who had dallied long
In the vale to list to the streamlet's song.
Others, who'd flirted the long day through,
With the meadow-sweet, and the speedwell blue,
Now listlessly through the gloaming move
Sated—ay, to the full—with love !
And seeking yon poplars tall and grey,
Rustle their tresses, and die away.
A soft hush fell o'er field and dell,
The sun's last arrows came,
And we could see the laburnum tree
Those shafts had set aflame !
Each level ray from the god of day,
Flashed swiftly, o'er the wold,
And in their light, each blossom bright
Shone forth like burnished gold !
And as we gaze, a fancy strays

Unsought—into my breast
 A dream of eld, when Alfred held
 The sceptre in the West.
 When jewels rare swung free and fair
 From every bending spray,
 On birch or thorn from night to morn,
 From morn till close of day !
 And to and fro the people go
 Beneath those tempting trees
 Where rich chains glance, and bracelets dance
 With every passing breeze.
 And though each eye will soon espy
 Those novel blossoms there,
 No single hand thro' all the land
 To gather one would dare !
 Oh ! it was grand, thro' all the land
 They swung unharmed in air.
 Did not those blossoms burning bright
 In that last fiery glow,
 Remind us of the strangest sight
 That eyes shall ever know ?
Then golden chains flashed back the light,
Now golden flowers I trow !

And as aloud I spoke my thought.
 In tones that told of tenderness,
 And clasped her hands, so rarely wrought
 With soft and subtle slenderness !
 The metaphor was fine, she said,
 She liked its quaintness mightily,

Then reaching up her shapely head,
She kissed my cheek delightedly—
When like a maiden in a dream
She mused awhile deliciously,
Whilst o'er her forehead's tender gleam,
The shadows slid capriciously !
But one by one, she fondly flung
Back each swift glance again to me,
And then with bell-like accents sung
This sweet yet solemn strain to me !

SONG.

Now has the sheen and splendour of the day,
The daring, dazzling day,
Departed.
Across the spirit steals a deep repose
That o'er its own turmoil and trouble throws
A spell that even charms away *your* woes,
Sad-hearted !

II.

Now has the mighty monarch of the sky,
The silent star-strewn sky,
Descended
With stately steps a splendid shining stair,
Poised in the purple prairies of air
To nether worlds—for *us* his reign so fair
Has ended !

III.

Beneath the wings of twilight—wondrous wings !
Those dim delicious wings,
Are folden

The garish glories of the summer scene,
Wild woodland ways, and solitudes serene,
Far-flaming fields, and glowing gardens green
And golden !

IV.

Her sister Silence too, with unseen hand,
With pale uplifted hand
Is hushing
Sounds that from pleasant places all remote,
To our charmed ears on gentle zephyrs float,
And streams of song that from each tiny throat
Are gushing !

V.

And slowly, surely, fadeth flood and fell,
Familiar flood and fell,
From vision.
As things grow dim to darkened dying eyes
So sadly strained towards the summer skies,
Ere the freed soul shall pass where landscapes rise
Elysian !

VI.

But soon, a sister who is sterner still,
A sister sadder still,
Shall follow !
Veiling with sable shroud a world at rest,
The still dim woodlands pictured in the West,
The purple hills, and many a rugged crest,
And hollow.

Thus sang my love, and as her accents sweet
Upon the evening breezes died away,
Within my soul was born an answer meet,
And so I chanted this responsive lay :—

I

He will arise the fairer for his flight,
His far and fiery flight,
To-morrow !
Will rise again “with healing in his wings,”
To shed new beauty on material things,
And steal from saddened souls the subtle stings
Of sorrow.

II

To-night he fled in robes of blue and gold—
Of burning, burnished gold,
And amber,
The morrow morn with pageantry as rare,
He will return from regions strange and fair,
And bravely *up* that vast aerial stair
Will clamber.

III.

Now at his passing, Silence from her lair,
Her lonely leafy lair,
Is stealing,
Then will he scare that mute mysterious maid
Back to the depths of her congenial shade,
And once again with song will every glade
Be pealing !

IV.

Were day not tracked with stealthy steps by night,
 The needful noiseless night,
 We never
 Should feel the flush of sunset in the West
 Fall, like a spell, upon the weary breast,
 But still in ceaseless toil should find no rest
 For ever !

V.

So now we face the fury of the sun,
 The scorching summer sun,
 Undaunted ;
 Assured that to this blinding glare and heat
 There will succeed an hour hushed and sweet,
 When stars shall shine, and dells by fairy feet
 Be haunted !

VI.

So life's red river with its troubled tide,
 Its tearful troubled tide,
 Is tending
 Towards a silent and a soundless sea
 That sweeps those shadowy shores, where haply we
 May greet our dead anon—where bliss shall be
 Unending !

Ceasing, I felt that her arm tightened palpably,
 As it lay locked in my own !
 Was it my strain had awakened old memories,
 Now that the daylight had flown ?

Wanderings olden through musical labyrinths,
We and the birdies alone !

Ay 'twas my song had awakened those memories
Slumbering deep in her breast,
Called them from sleep to bring joy to my Lilian,
Now, at this hour of rest !
Holding in higher and holier ecstasy,
Lilian, brightest and best.

Though from her spirit flowed love in his plenitude,
Through the dear dells of *to-day*,
Flowed like a river—divine—irresistible,
Freshening all in his way,
Scorning impediments—laughing at obstacles—
Sparkling, and joyous, and gay,

Yet tiny rills from the fountains of memory,
Haply, may hasten to swell
Love's parent stream, from their sources mysterious,
Where the dead seasons do dwell !
Losing themselves in that current's sublimity,
Deeper than mortals can tell.

So we roved on through the shades that were
deepening
Fast on the face of the land,
Blotting from vision the meadows Elysian,
Woods and the moorland so grand !
Slowly roved on with a mystical tightening
Still, of the grasp of the hand.

Then as we paused on a gentle declivity,
 Paused on the crest of the hill,
 Gleamed through the gloaming the gold of the daffodils,
 Sleeping beneath by the rill—
 Shot a faint fire from fairy-like fastnesses,
 Fading, but beautiful still !

So, through the gathering gloom of adversity,
 Out of the depths of the heart,
 Brighter thoughts rise to console and to gladden us,
 Blunting Despondency's dart,
 Stars in the shroud that the fell fates are weaving us,
 Bidding despair to depart !

Dian anon through the cloudless immensity,
 Floated refulgent and cold,
 Flooding with silver the landscape grown dim to us,
 Whitening woodland and wold !
 Giving a glory to cottages ivy-wreathed,
 And the grey castles of old.

Then to my tender and exquisite Lilian,
 Stainless as Dian on high,
 Breathed I a thought that I feared me was fanciful
 (*All* will be shown us by-and-by).
This was the fancy I whispered to Lilian,
 Under the star-paven sky !

"Love ! when a spirit long freed from its tenement,
 Visits this planet once more,
 Lovelier far in the *shadow* that steals to us,
 Than was the *substance* of yore !

For the strange beauty that awes yet enraptures us,
Speaks of the shadowy shore !

So, all the objects whose charms are luxuriant,
In the broad glare of the sun,
Are but the shrines of the spirit that dwells in them,
Hidden in every one !

Flower and fern will be there in their *verity*,
Only when daylight is done !

For, as the souls of the loved ones who lived with us,
Come in the depths of the night,
So will those strange immaterial essences,
Then steal upon our sight !

Bower and bush in their *innermost* loveliness,
Touched by that silvery light !

Ay, the whole world that is only *material*,
Witchingly fair though it be !

May shrine *another* of beauty unthinkable,
Which these dim eyes cannot see ;

But we shall pierce to the *core* of the universe,
When the swift spirit is free !”

This was the fancy I whispered to Lilian,
In the deep hush of the night,
Lilian laughed for a moment—then clung to me,
Closer in childish delight !

Yielding those scarlet and ravishing lips of hers,
Murmuring, “ Love ! you are right.”

Then on a theme that is trite yet mysterious,
Pondered we deeply I ween,

How the mind's hue will infuse itself silently,
 Into the landscape serene !
 How the mere mood of the gazer unconsciously,
 Lends its own tint to the scene !

Thus when the heart brimmeth over with happiness,
 And all undimmed is the eye,
 Beauty's blithe spirit enchants the waste wilderness,
 Deepens the blue of the sky !
 Graceful the sweep of the wind-rustled foliage,
 Musical every sigh !

Happiness is a magician whose potency
 Works on the soul like a spell,
 Lending a freshness to bird-woven minstrelsy,
 Lovelier making the dell !
 Finding new charms in the mighty empyrean,
 Where our vanished ones dwell !

He is an artist, whose pencil's rare subtlety
 Beautifies every spot ;
 Making the homeliest landscape a paradise,
 Hallowing garden and grot !
 Brightens the tints of the flowers that smile on us,
 Sweetens the lowliest lot !

But when the mind is disturbed and tempestuous,
 Harsh is the voice of the dove,
 Flown is the fairness from Nature's bright countenance
 Blurred is the landscape we love !
 Jarring the breezes' mysterious melody,
 Joyless the Heavens above !

These were the fancies that came to us wandering
Homewards in exquisite bliss,
Where there were none to reprove our tardinesss,
None our absence to miss !
Dian alone saw the infinite ecstasy,
Of the long passionate kiss.

Yet was my Lilian airily sceptical,
For there were seasons, she said,
When, though the spirit was writhing in agony,
And bowed in anguish the head,
Yet was the landscape unchanged to the sufferer,
Nor had its loveliness fled.

Then Nature flaunts her unbridled luxuriance
In our grief-furrowed face,
Driving us wild with her sheen and her colouring,
And her unspeakable grace !
Making us wish that the clouds would, in sympathy,
Veil the deep vault for a space !

Then how the voice of the dove from the greenery
Grates on the listener's ear !
Hateful the strain of the lark floating heavenwards
On through the ether so clear !
Nature seems mocking us cruelly, cruelly,
When *our* lot is so drear !

And I was fain to assent to this after-thought,
Born in my Lilian's brain,
As we moved on through that silvery radiance
To our bower again—

M

Whilst the rich plaint of the nightingale amorous
Startled night's shadowy reign !

Darkness was deepening, rapidly, silently,
O'er the fair objects around,
Dian's clear lustre grew more and more luminous,
And the soft hush more profound !
Soon had the nightingale finished her lullaby,
Scarcely the ghost of a sound !

Thus as the heart that is wayward and wandering,
Sinks in the mire of sin,
Brighter the glance of the pitying Deity,
Seeking the truant within !
Flooding the gloom of the soul in its misery,
Hoping the lost one to win !

So we reached our fairy bower looking at that witching
hour,
Fitter home for happy spirits, than for denizens of
earth,
As we two romantic mortals flitted through its rose-
wreathed portals,
With our hearts in rapture beating, but too full for open
mirth !
Silently the moon was stealing into our nest, revealing
All the objects of the chamber, where we sheltered from
the sun,
Throwing an unearthly lustre on the dimly graceful
cluster
Of those flowers, we had gathered ere the day had well
begun !

Then my love from my caresses would detach her bonny
tresses,
And to the piano running, would at random strike the
keys,
Waking soon a strain that never dies, but haunts my
brain for ever,
Singing in the silvery silence some such winsome words
as these—

SONG.

Fade day, bright day, far into azure space, day !
To rise again in other lands that lie beyond the West,
I am not heavy hearted, though you and I have parted,
For sunset saw me leaning on my true lover's breast !

Blow winds, soft winds, from balmy brakes afar, winds,
And whisper solemn secrets to the poplars dim and
grey,

I care not I to ponder on what ye murmur yonder,
So long as *one* can whisper, I reckon not what you say !

Shine stars, bright stars, from out of dreamy depths,
stars !

By you God writes in fire upon the face of night,
You too, will flee when morning the landscape is
adorning,

But *my soul's* star burns ever in my raptured sight !

Steal sleep, swift sleep, across these eyes of mine, sleep !
And let my soul of restfulness now take its own sweet
fill !

I'll never thee be chiding for daylight glories hiding,
For in my dreams my love will lie upon my bosom still !

She ceased, and rising slowly
As the lingering cadence dies,
Towards my silent figure
She turned her angel eyes !

Then o'er the stream of moonlight,
That lay along the floor,
She stole, as steals a vision
From the eternal shore !

As some strange shadowy maiden
From Paradise, may seem
To touch our lips, and wake us
From a " dream within a dream ! "

So softly did my Lilian
Athwart the twilight glide,
Her gleaming arms extended,
To nestle by my side !

And deep into the night of June,
Whilst the moon shone clear and cold,
We sat, and opened soul to soul
In that dim time of old !

* * * * *

But *now* the mists are gathering,
O'er Memory's mystic well,
The light is fading silently
From bower, cot, and dell !

A sable pall falls fearfully,
Across my inner sight,
And my Lillian and her memories
Have passed into the night !

THE RUSTIC BEAUTY.

HERS was a lowly English home,
From fashion's realm apart,
The wish beyond her glen to roam
Had never touched her heart.
Her father's cot beside the stream,
With brightest bloom was gay,
And by the beck, would Dora dream
The summer hours away !
I know not what her reveries were,
Her musings may have strayed,
At times, to regions far and fair
Beyond her native glade.
She may have marvelled oft and long
About the world unknown
As singing softly some sweet song
She graced the mossy stone !
But when she rose, her day-dreams done,
Deep sylvan paths to tread,
Her foolish fancies, every one,
Had vanished from her head !

And as with dainty cherry lip,
She pressed the foxglove's bell,
Essaying, like the bee, to sip
The honey from its cell ;
And as the poppies red she laid
Amid her tresses' night,
You saw a merry dark-eyed maid,
A daughter of delight !
Nor was it strange that she should love
Her cosy nest so well,
Where she could share with tender dove
The fragrance of the dell ;
For blushing rose, and woodbine sweet
Entwined with ivy green
All beautified the fair retreat
Of this, our woodland queen !
Her parents worshipped, it was said,
The very ground she trod,
And for her weal, each humble head
Was nightly bowed to God.
Her father was a peasant—one
Who bared his sinewy arm
Each day for toil till set of sun
Upon a neighbour's farm.
And though he could not boast descent
From kinsmen great and grand,
And though he paid a hard-earned rent
This tiller of the land,
Yet, as he wielded hoe or spade,
Or gaily drove the plough,

Or haply rested in the shade,
You marked his massive brow !
You saw a manly sunburnt face
Beneath his grizzled hair,
No cloud of anger or disgrace,
Had ever rested there !
A man whose muscles seemed to be
Of iron ; on whose wrist
The knotted veins were good to see,
As was the brawny fist !
What, though his garb was scant and thin,
The gazer passed that by,
And only saw the *soul* within ;
The clear unflinching eye !
No puppet in the human form,
To show the tailor's art,
But one who would, through shine and storm,
Right nobly play his part !
Her mother had been fair of yore,
And forty years ago,
Had reckoned lovers by the score,
Each proud to be her beau !
She was another Dora then,
As lithesome, and as fair,
Like her, the beauty of the glen,
With flowing raven hair !
To see them standing side by side,
It was a comely sight,
The daughter in her noonday pride,
With roses red bedight,

The mother handsome even yet,
 Though long beyond her prime,
 Her star of loveliness had set
 Behind the hills of Time,
 Yet, as it slowly passed away,
 It left a matchless grace,
 The glories of a brighter day
 Were stamped upon her face !
 And as she raised her eyes above,
 As though in voiceless prayer,
 Then let them fall in tender love
 Upon her daughter fair,
 You felt that *here* was perfect peace,
 That knew no chilling fears,
 Heart knit to heart, love's rich increase
 That strengthened with the years !

And thus their days sped sweetly, for hidden they
 completely
 From the gay and garish doings of the giddy world
 outside,
 Their blithe bark smoothly gliding, and each in each
 confiding,
 They floated gently Heavenwards, upon a summer tide !

But like some lovely flower in lady's secret bower,
 Where no rude hand could tear it from its mossy nest of
 green,
 So Dora here was hidden, unchiding and unchidden,
 A perfect human flower—unsought because unseen !

At dawn she would awaken, her curtains lightly shaken
By the early morning breezes that wooed the trellised
 rose,
They stirred with soft caresses her dark luxuriant
 tresses,
And whispered her to dream no more in indolent
 repose.

Then resting cheek so pure and warm, upon one dimpled
 rounded arm,
And pushing back the clust'ring curls from her divine
 young brow,
She looked with lustrous longing eyes upon the glowing
 summer skies,
And on the scenes so fair at eve, but fresher, fairer,
 now !

Then would she robe herself in haste, and round her
 darling dainty waist,
Most deftly clasp the happy zone that pressed it all the
 day,
Next make her orisons so sweet, and then with tiny
 twinkling feet,
Would trip downstairs—her doves caress—then slowly
 roam away.

The chaffinch trim he cried "kink ! kink !" as she
 approached the brooklet's brink
The merle he fluted to her from the leafy linden-tree,

170 *SKETCHES IN PROSE AND VERSE.*

The mavis piped a greeting which countless throats
repeating,
The woodland chorus seemed to say "How beautiful is
she!"

One morning in delicious June, when birds and brook-
let sang in tune,
And scent of flowers from afar was borne upon the
breeze,
When sparkling dewdrops everywhere made leafy
labyrinths more fair
And dazzling diamond showers were descending from
the trees ;

Fair Dora rosy from her rest, slipped softly from her
cosy nest,
And passing through a paradise of melody and bloom,
She slowly threaded that deep vale, as many a minstrel
told his tale
Of love, where boughs o'erarching, made a cool and
tender gloom ;

The mild blue violet at her feet, the wild rose and the
woodbine sweet,
The golden goblets brimmed with dew, for fays their
thirst to slake,
The tall marsh orchid's stately spire, the dandelion
tipped with fire,
All seemed to look their brightest *then*, for darling Dora's
sake !

And now beside the brooklet clear
 Stood Beauty's glowing daughter,
While softly stole upon her ear
 The music of the water.

The sweet forget-me-nots that grew
 Amid the homely cresses,
She lightly from their coverts drew
 To mingle with her tresses.

She celandines that fringed with flame
 The streamlet of my story,
Her raven ringlets well became,
 As stars lend night a glory !

The wet wild roses from the spray
 That kissed the mimic billow,
She plucked—ah, happy roses they
 Her bosom for their pillow !

Where fretted ferns in silence kept
 Their vigil pure and tender,
The maiden reverently slept,
 As loth to mar their splendor.

At last upon a mossy bank,
 Beneath a natural bower,
In pleasant weariness she sank,
 To dream one little hour !

A graceful willow-herb that stood
 Beside the baby river,
She watched in listless loving mood
 And saw its leaflets shiver.

Its base the wearied waters sweep,
There indolently flowing,
And imaged in the crystal deep
She watched it downwards growing.

Below, its purple petals gleam
Upon her eager vision,
The phantom flower of a dream,
In aqueous groves Elysian.

And root to root the two incline,
The real and fancied flower,
Whilst two dark eyes upon them shine
From that enchanting bower.

Anon—a whistle that she knew,
And like an azure arrow,
The halcyon flashed upon her view
Along the streamlet narrow.

A sudden swerve, and he alit
Upon a willow hoary,
And there she saw him silent sit,
The fisher famed in story!

She saw him downwards dart—a gleam
Like silver flecked the water,
As some bright tenant of the stream
He bore aloft for slaughter!

And once again, as still as death
He hung above the river,
Scarce Dora dared to draw her breath,
Her slender nostrils quiver.

How beautiful he was ! His breast
 With orange splendors flaming !
How matchless in his perfect rest,
 His hue the heavens shaming !

Anon a rustling overhead,
 A finch's treble twitter,
And swiftly up the stream he sped,
 That solemn silent sitter !

The maiden watched him disappear
 Behind a bank of flowers,
To sport in distant shallows clear
 Through sunshine and through showers.

She felt as though some vision bright,
 But seldom seen by mortals,
Had vanished from her ravished sight,
 Through Dreamland's mythic portals.

But there were rarer, lovelier things
 In that enchanted region,
Fair fragile flies with gauzy wings,
 An "airy fairy" legion !

She saw them like the sunbeams dance
 Upon the waters sparkling,
Whilst far beneath the troutlets glance,
 Through depths remote and darkling.

The gaudy dragon fly sailed by
 On light transparent pinions,
The lark rained music from the sky
 Upon our Queen's dominions.

And all the while, the feathered throng
 From bosky brake and bower,
 Accompanied the streamlet's song
 In that delicious hour.

Sweet Dora's heart was light that morn,
 Her eyes content betrayed,
 She felt it good to have been born
 Within that quiet glade !
 But when was rose without its thorn ?
 When sunshine without shade ?

And so, though Nature's wide domain
 Could yield no fairer nest,
 A longing that was almost pain,
 Arose within her breast,
 Till every sprightly songster's strain
 Was pregnant with unrest.

And soon the music wild and clear,
 That filled the lonely dell,
 Allured a tiny trembling tear
 From its translucent cell,
 Though conscious of its *birth*, I fear,
 Its *source* she could not tell.

Anon, the minstrelsy around
 Awoke a kindred fire,
 And merle and mavis wond'ring found
 A rival in the choir !
 Hushed seemed each pleasant sylvan sound
 As Dora struck the lyre !

SONG.

The spirit of Love, like a white-winged dove,
Is abroad in the woods to-day,
In his gentle breast is a sweet unrest
As he wingeth his winsome way
From the shadowy dell, where the bluebells dwell,
To the lanes all white with may.

He springs at dawn with the dappled fawn
From the depths of the dewy brake,
He woos the trees with the first faint breeze
That dimples the sleeping lake,
He stirs the cells of the foxglove's bells,
'Ere the woods are well awake !

When the glades at noon in a golden swoon
Are folden, his fair white wings
May rest awhile, but we see his smile
In a thousand fairy things !
On the boughs above, with the dreaming dove
He softly slowly swings !

When the twilight pale broodeth o'er the vale,
And soft sounds steal from far,
He wings his flight through the purple night,
To welcome the first faint star !
Till the stars wax dim, you must look for him
" Where the eternal's are ! "

O spirit of Love ! O white winged dove !
That cleaveth the deep blue air,

Thy presence thrills the eternal hills
 And maketh the vales more fair !
 O sink to rest on a maiden's breast,
 And dwell for a season there !

She ceased—her silvery accents died away
 Upon the breeze of morn ;
 The merle made answer from the linden spray,
 The mavis from the thorn !

But Dora, glancing at a grassy glade
 That sloped towards the stream,
 Saw a man's figure standing in the shade—
 Or was it but a dream ?

It was the vision of a stalwart lad
 Framed by the foliage fair,
 His cheeks were bronzed, his honest eyes were
 glad,
 He smiled upon her there !

The maiden knew him with his weapon keen,
 A woodman's son was he,
 And wreathed in bloom she saw his axe's sheen
 Beside an ancient tree.

He sped some sportive shafts across the beck,
 Some rustic greeting gay,
 The crimson blushes mantled on her neck,
 She knew not what to say !

She deemed her pæan had been only heard
By rivals that she knew ;
But *now* it seemed, one wiser than a bird,
Had listened to it too.

He lived in yonder hamlet nestling low,
Amid the distant trees ;
They oft had met beside the streamlet's flow
With greeting such as these.

In days gone by, at sundry rural fairs,
He'd often sought her side,
And with her, 'mid the piles of homely wares,
Had walked in honest pride.

But *then*, as soon would he have sought to bring
The pale moon to his feet,
As woo the woodland beauty, fresh as spring,
And as the summer sweet.

And Dora, though no fances weak or vain
Disturbed her pretty head,
Might well have counted on a nobler swain
If she was to be wed !

But *now* she saw a purpose in his eyes
And they were clear and true,
As joyous as the laughing summer skies,
And like those skies, their hue.

It might have been the glamour of the spot,
The witchery of the hour,
But Love stole in, where Love before was not,
She trembled in her bower !

She trembled like a rose that softly sways
 Within an arbour's gloom,
 Stirred by the gentle gale that coyly plays
 About its tender bloom.

And he—he marked the tell-tale blushes fleet
 Across her cheek—and more—
 That half averted gaze so shy and sweet,
 Yet never seen before.

So lightly leaping o'er the crystal rill,
 He gained that arbour dim;
 Where she was resting in confusion still,
 But with a smile for *him* !

And taking one fair hand within his own,
 He told the old, old tale
 Whilst Cupid laughed ; the shaft had fairly flown,
 In that enchanted vale.

The old, old tale which lads and lassies told
 When this grey world was young !
 The dearest words that human lips can mould,
 The sweetest ever sung !

And so they parted—he, the woods to roam,
 Till setting of the sun ;
 Whilst Dora musing, sought her quiet home,
 A maiden wooed and won !

The mother watched at the wicket long
 For her beautiful child's return,

She hummed to herself a low sweet song,
And toyed with a fragile fern—
And she wondered awhile, if aught was wrong,
With the wanderer by the burn.

How pure that face of the matron fair,
Turned full to the rich June gale !
How soft the tresses of silvered hair
That shaded her forehead pale,
As she stood at the little wicket there,
In the depths of the dreamy dale.

When lo ! in her eyes came a sudden light,
On her cheek was a radiance born,
As a young form stole on her eager sight,
From behind the familiar thorn ;
And her clear tones ring with a deep delight
Through the golden aisles of morn.

The daughter flew on the wings of Love
To her home on the yearning breast,
As the tender young of the blue-winged dove
Will hie to their quiet nest ;
But the sun rode high in the arch above,
And the time had come for rest !

So let us glance at the maid once more,
Ere she vanishes from the view
Through the trellised porch of the cottage door,
Where the loveliest creepers grew,
For never another by sea or shore,
Is a prettier lass to woo !

Her raven hair, like the shades of night,
 Fell over her neck of snow,
 With the celandine's bonny bloom bedight,
 The shadow was starlit now,
 And her eyes still shone with the happy light,
 They borrowed awhile ago !

Her form was light as a fay's might be,
 But the rounded limbs were fair
 Her brow was high, and her step was free—
 As free as her native air !
 And, oh ! how her rippling laugh of glee
 Rang out through the valley there !

Her teeth flashed forth with a saucy sheen
 From the lips that were Beauty's own,
 For a moment's space was their splendor seen,
 Ere the liquid laugh had flown !
 To press the lips of the woodland queen,
 A monarch had left his throne.

So mother and child with their arms entwined,
 Like lovers whose hearts are gay,
 Passed under the portals, and left behind
 The dazzling glare of day !
 And they went about with a tranquil mind
 The duties that nearest lay.

For Dora's task, there was lavender sweet
 To gather in garden plot,
 And lay in sprays on each snowy sheet
 They had in their cosy cot ;

POEMS, DESCRIPTIVE & SENTIMENTAL. 181

There were doves to screen from the mid-day heat,
And sundry flowers to pot !

There were beauties to pull from their glowing bed
To garnish the humble board—
A tender kiss on her shapely head
Was the winsome girl's reward
From her father's lips, as he homewards sped
At noon, o'er the daisied sward !

And as they sat at their humble meal
Prepared with a loving care,
Through the trellised porch would the breezes steal
And flutter that raven hair !
Whilst the merle's clear notes through the valley peal
To gladden the sitters there !

The father's locks by the wind were stirred,
His voice had a cheery ring,
And if the mother's was seldom heard,
It was that her thoughts did wing
Their silent way, like a viewless bird,
Towards *her* departed "spring !"

And so the day wore slowly by,
With homely joys, and converse light,
Till twilight steals across the sky,
And distant objects fade away from sight ;
Again the father's step is heard,
Again his daughter's lips are pressed
As like some graceful fluttering bird,
She sinks upon his manly breast !

The maiden through the afternoon
 Had moved as in some pleasant dream
 Now humming fragments of a tune,
 Now sitting silent by the stream !
 Like gossamer her footsteps fell,
 She seemed the sunlit sward to skim,
 She knew that " Robin " loved her well,
 And all her heart went out to him !

And as she bent with careless grace
 To pluck a rose, or pet a dove,
 The vision of her sweetheart's face
 Wakes in her eyes the light of love !
 The vision of a quiet glade—
 An axe half hidden by the fern,
 A figure standing in the shade
 The wealth of bloom—the brawling burn.

But now the happy day is done,
 The sounds of evening steal from far,
 The eyes erst dazzled by the sun,
 Are bent upon a single star !
 Athwart the dusk the brown bats flit,
 A subtle fragrance haunts the gale,
 As child and parents musing sit
 At that fair porch within the vale.

The night—the balmy summer night
 Was preternaturally calm,
 The brooklet in the waning light
 Made music like a vesper psalm !

The silence soon was that of death,
Oppressive, fateful, and profound,
When lo ! the gale's prophetic breath
Steals through the woods with mournful sound.

Clouds dark and sullen veil the star
That cheered them with its tranquil ray,
A hollow rumbling from afar
Proclaimed the tempest on its way !
Anon upon the slumbering leaves,
Big rain-drops patter, one by one ;
The wind in fitful passion grieves,
The elemental war's begun !

They rise and swiftly pass within,
The lattice yields to Dora's hand,
And louder yet the storm's wild din
Peals through that whilom fairy-land !
The boughs are bending to the blast,
Red lightning flashes through the gloom,
In sheets the rain is falling fast,
And all seems fraught with death and doom !

A lull anon ! From far adown the vale
Stole on their ears a feeble human cry,
Drowned the next moment by the angry wail
Of the wild wind that swept the stormy sky ;
And they all heard it ; so, when hallowed peace
Returned once more with Luna's silvery light,
When, as before, they saw the clouds of fleece
Sailing above them through the summer night,

The father sallied forth, and bent his way
 Towards the spot from whence had come the sound,
 And in the radiance of a softer day,
 He moved through vistas silent and profound,
 At length, within a solitary glade
 He found a prostrate youth who moaned with pain,
 Upon his pallid brow the moonbeams played,
 And once he tried to rise, but all in vain !

But Dora's sire was an angel sent
 By God to aid this victim of mischance,
 Above whose slender form the peasant bent
 With mute inquiry in his pitying glance.
 The tale came slowly from the man who lay
 With shattered limb, amid the dark drenched bloom,
 His horse had thrown him, then had sped away
 Winged by some sudden fear, athwart the gloom !

Next came a dread dull pain, and when he tried
 To rise he sank exhausted on the fern,
 And 'mid the tempest's din had faintly cried
 For succour—more the peasant could not learn
 Just then—but raising that disabled frame
 In his strong sinewy arms, his burden bore
 With loving tenderness until they came
 Through the pale moonlight to the cottage door.

But the two women met them at the gate,
 And Dora's glowing cheeks were blanched with fear,
 At first, on hearing of the stranger's fate ;
 But from her father's face she soon took cheer,

And with her mother hastened to prepare
 Their one spare chamber for the injured guest
Then on the couch they laid him down with care,
 When soon he passed into uneasy rest,

His sleep was feverish, and broken oft
 By words disjointed, and by hollow moan,
And through the night with whispers low and soft
 They moved about, nor left him once alone.
For three long hours Dora kept his side,
 But her sad vigil ended with the dawn,
When the strong sun-god wooed the earth, his bride,
 And kissed the slopes upon "the upland lawn."

Yet, as the girl had marked his brow of snow,
 O'er which his curls in matted clusters fell,
As she had watched his tossings to and fro,
 And heard his moans ; from the translucent well
Of her dark eyes the tear-drops streamed like rain,
 And a swift prayer was haply winged above,
She almost seemed herself to share his pain,
 And maiden pity is akin to love !

Her father when he saw the stranger's case,
 Had for a surgeon sped ; but miles away
The nearest lived, nor did his welcome face
 Appear till noon of the ensuing day,
He looked most grave, enjoined a lengthened rest,
 The shattered limb with skill undoubted set,
Left sundry medicines, praised their cosy nest,
 Their doves, and Dora's box of mignonette,

And then departed. But the youth anon
 Felt the pain lessen, and the fever's flame
 Waxed slowly fainter, as the day wore on,
 And natural slumber locked his wearied frame,
 He woke refreshed at setting of the sun,
 Of slender aliment partook ; and next
 He thanked his watchers lovingly, each one,
 For their warm sympathy ; felt sorely vexed
 To tax their kindness so ; in simple truth,
 No words could half his gratitude express
 For their compassion on an ill-starred youth,
 Their hearty aid, and timely tenderness.

That night he slept in peace, and in his dreams
One figure mingled strangely—in his ears
 Sang blythesome birds, and murmured crystal streams.
 When on the morrow morn, again appears
 The trusty surgeon, looking grave no more,
 While gazing at the clearer, brighter face,
 And so another day to evening wore,
 And bright stars trembled in the vaulted space.

We need not dwell upon the pleasant time
 Passed by the stranger in that quiet vale,
 A fair girl near him, summer in her prime,
 The breath of flowers wafted on the gale !
 Through open lattice floated ringdove's coo
 Upon the summer wind ; returning health
 Bid him the " turtles " emulate, and woo
 The graceful daughter of his host by stealth.

His limb at last was strong, and he could walk ;
For dallying longer no excuse had he,
But O the moonlight, and the rapturous talk
With lovely Dora 'neath the linden-tree !
In her pure bosom too, unrest was born,
She seemed to hold him somewhat more than friend ;
But still met Robin at the "trysting thorn,"
And promised she would love him to the end !

Good Robin learnt from her sweet lips this tale,
And doubted not his graceful singing bird,
Yet *some one* marked her cheek would often pale,
And marvelled much, but never said a word !

He would surely vanish to-morrow,
Like the sheen of the early rime,
And a bosom was full of sorrow
Beneath the familiar lime.

They never again would wander
Together by lea or shore,
And the bird from the coppice yonder
Sang "Never ! ah ! never more !"

His eyes met hers in the gloaming,
He asked her to be his bride,
As far through the radiance roaming,
They paused by the brooklet's side.

But soon was the battle over,
Releasing her prisoned palm,
She steadfastly looked at her lover,
And her face, as the night, was calm !

She told him her heart was given
 To one in her humble sphere,
 On earth she had found a Heaven,
 That Heaven, she felt, was here !

She saw his proud nostrils quiver,
 A tear in his full dark eye,
 And then by the mimic river,
 He bade her a last good-bye !

Too well did he love the maiden,
 His claim on her hand to press—
 But the night with a cloud seemed laden,
 And shorn of its loveliness !

That eve to his friends with sorrow,
 He uttered a fond farewell,
 And at dawn on the lonely morrow
 Was miles from the leafy dell !

* * * * *

When mute was the sylvan choir,
 And the foliage flecked with gold,
 There pealed from the nearest spire,
 Far over the silent wold,

Sweet sounds through the mists of morning,
 Glad bells for a bridal day,—
 A bride her dark hair adorning,
 And a bridegroom blithe as May !

A father their joyance sharing,
A mother all smiles and tears,
And a bonny young pair preparing
To thread the "valley of years !"

WITHIN AND WITHOUT.

THE spring comes softly as of yore,
With mirth and music in her train,
I see the joyous skylark soar
On wings of matchless song again,
The bluebell and the primrose pale
Their lovely standards have unfurled,
And as of old, the vernal gale
Sweeps over an awakened world.

I feel, as in the days gone by,
Upon my cheek the spring's soft kiss,
And all fair things beneath the sky
Seem wedded to unchequered bliss.
The winds are soft, the air is clear,
Pink blossoms tremble on the spray,
And o'er the hills I seem to hear,
Wild winter's clarion far away !

The swallow will be here ere long,
From sunnier shores, to skim the stream
And soon one glorious burst of song
Shall waken Silence from her dream.

Yon western woodlands that I love,
 Shall don again their gala dress,
 And earth below, and Heaven above,
 Shall palpitate with loveliness.

Then if the forests are as fair,
 As in the hours of long ago,
 As soft the blossom-scented air,
 As bright the kingcup's golden glow,
 Why is it, heart, thou dost not beat
 Responsive to this flood of joy,
 As once thou throbbed, when visions sweet
 Of spring first burst upon the boy?

Where lies the change? 'Tis not in thee,
 Thou blue empyrean clear and bright,
 Nor is it in yon trembling tree,
 Nor in the swallow's fitful flight!
 The violet has not lost its hue,
 Untarnished is the kingcup's gold,
 Yet both are homelier to my view,
 Than in the fairy days of old.

Where is the change? The low reply
 Comes slowly, sadly, from within
 "It is not in the earth or sky,
 But that thy heart is set on sin,
 Thy inner sight is clouded o'er
 With mists that gather with the years,
 And sealed to thee is Nature's lore,
 Until that inner vision clears!"

Thus speaks my soul—alas ! I feel
Her answer true, though with a sigh
God's wondrous works will ne'er reveal
Their beauty to the roving eye !
The feeble senses cannot reap
The harvest Nature's bounty yields,
Can never plumb her mystic deep,
Or gauge the glory of her fields !

In boyhood was my ardour keen,
And fully strung each subtle sense,
Enjoyment of the sylvan scene
Was real, luxurious, intense !
But still that fragment of delight
Being sensual, was a barren dole,
It could not reach the inner sight,
Or pierce the windows of the soul !

And now apace my senses wane
Their golden heyday long has passed,
I tax their powers all in vain,
For Time has sapped their strength at last !
Though sullen mists of doubt and dread,
That gather still, my soul is hurled,
And thus I wander dazed, and dead
To all the wonders of the world !

Once would the rustle of a bird,
Amid the leaves that hid its nest,
(Although by careless ears unheard)
Make pleasant sunshine in my breast.

Once would the wave of some wild wing,
 Or some hedge sweetling's tender hue,
 Deep rapture o'er my spirit fling—
 Joy oft renewed—yet ever new !

Once would the ripple of a rill,
 Deep hidden in the forest's heart,
 Make music all too sweet, until
 The tear-drops would unbidden start !
 Once would a shower's rhythmic sound,
 Like drowsy opiate lull my brain,
 I mused upon enchanted ground,
 Chained by the spell of silver rain.

But now the seasons come and go,
 Fair summer in her glowing pride,
 Sad autumn, winter wreathed with snow,
 And spring a tearful blushing bride !
 Far sylvan solitudes still ring
 With song throughout the dreamy days,
 The merle shoots past on sable wing,
 Wild roses haunt untrodden ways !

But like an empty show is all
 To one who walks with darkened eyes,
 No stars can glimmer through the pall
 That deepens like the midnight skies !
 Ah ! sylvan songster, sing thy fill
 To him who lends a knowing ear,
 Ah ! ripple, rapid restless rill,
 To those who hold thy music dear !

I bow abashed—I am afraid
To think how little we can guess,
E'en with the senses' puny aid,
Of Nature's matchless loveliness !
We reach as with a tiny ray
Of farthing taper through the gloom,
But all beyond our little day
Is sealed and silent as the tomb !

An alteration passing slight,
In this our nerve of vision—then
What boundless vistas of delight
Might open on the eyes of men !
Or were another sense our own,
What depths of insight should we gain
A million wonders erst unknown,
Would flash upon the startled brain !

Conceive the infant blind at birth,
The mind a perfect blank, unguessed
The garish beauty of the earth,
The mystery of ocean's breast !
An awful night without a morn
Would hold him as the seasons roll
In grandeur by—nor ever dawn
One glimpse of glory on his soul !

And to his ears strange sounds would come
From that wide world—a blank to him,

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A discord harsh, a muffled hum,
 The source unknown—the meaning dim !
 Bereft of pictures from *without*,
 Upon itself the mind would prey,
 Self-nourished fancies, fringed with doubt,
 Would hold their desultory sway !

Conceive him grown to man's estate,
 The film to fall from off his eyes ;
 One moment brooding o'er his fate,
 The next bewildered by the skies !
 His vision blinded by the burst
 Of beauty, strange the world would seem—
 And might he not conceive at first,
 The darkness *real*, the light a *dream* ?

Betwixt the blind, and those whose eyes
 Are flooded with the blessed light,
 A deep unfathomed chasm lies—
 One looks on noon—the other night !
 And yet between the eye of Sense,
 And that keen orb that burns behind,
 There yawns a barrier far more dense ;
 The keenest eyes, alas ! are blind !

Sense summons Science to her aid,
 So, to the microscope we fly,
 And Nature's fair domains invade
 With eager zest, and strengthened eye ;

We scan the grains of pollen dust,
The scales on wings, an insect's teeth,
But still can only take on trust
Things stranger far, that lie beneath !

And if through Science we can gain
Such insight into marvels new,
That in a single drop of rain
We see a countless living crew !
When the swift soul shall burst its sheath
Of coarse corporeal tissue—*then*
What marvels from above—beneath—
Shall rush into its ample ken !

Ah ! woeful lot ! condemned to move
Across this shallow vale below,
Whilst all around, beneath, above,
Are secrets Sense can never know !
Our eyes into the depths of space
An arrow's flight can scarcely reach ;
But morn is coming, we shall trace,
The truth across Time's fallen beach !

Analogies undreamt of, lie
Between the narrow sphere of Sense,
And that moot realm, beyond the eye
Where falsehood wars with innocence !
Eternal moral truths may boast
Their symbols in earth, air, and sea,
But we are guessers at the most
Till we have solved the great "To Be !"

And as I move across the vale
 Or linger in the woodlands, long,
 Strange voices whisper in the gale,
 Or mingle with the streamlet's song !
 They say " In us a meaning lies !
 Through *us*, God speaks to human ear !
 Oh, read our riddles, thou art wise,
 And flash their message far and near ! "

A few—alas ! a very few
 Of these analogies I read !
 The pearly drops of crystal dew
 That glance and sparkle on the mead,
 Are tears of gladness dawn doth shed
 For joy her heyday has begun,
 When once again she's free to wed
 The glorious manhood of the sun !

Winds crisp the golden fields I love,
 Their feathery billows dance with glee,
 Whilst shadows from the clouds above
 Skim swiftly o'er the grassy sea !
 Thus, do the gusts of passion play,
 Above our deeper thoughts in vain
 The soul may own their fickle sway
 A moment, then is calm again !

The vagrant zephyrs from the West,
 Stir not yon massive cedar there,
 Too deep the sturdy giant's rest,
 To bend to every idle air !

But yon pale harebell still will sway
With every whisper of the breeze,
That woos the blossoms of the may
Or waves the tresses of the trees

Thus will the hero true till death,
Like some grim mountain, scatheless stand,
Moved not by clamour's empty breath
When blown across a foolish land !
Light gusts of censure or applause,
Rock weaker brethren to and fro,
They vary with each changing cause,
And bend to all the winds that blow

These few analogies to me
Are loopholes in my spirit's night,
Through which are twinkling fitfully,
These distant glimmerings of light !
And other symbols fairer still,
At times, I fancy I can trace,
But *those* I cannot know, until
I meet my Maker face to face !

Though only such a little way
The curtain has been drawn aside,
Yet when the month was always May,
This scanty triumph was denied.
The *senses* drank their deepest then
From Beauty's chalice brimming o'er,
But no dim shadow reached my ken
From that far off mysterious shore !

And yet so seldom I can guess
 The meaning which is ever shrined
 In Nature's varied loveliness,
 That I am numbered with the blind !
 The senses duller than of yore,
 A thousand secrets sealed to me—
 I grope my way along the shore
 Of Nature's vast unfathomed sea !

One consolation still is left
 To gild my little life's decline,
 Of that keen joy of *sense* bereft,
 A rarer, holier gift is mine !
 I turn me to my friend or foe,
 And strive his subtlest thoughts to trace
 From all the shades that come and go
 Across the mirror of his face !

I strive to fathom, if I may,
 Mind's mighty mysteries ; and fain
 Would track the thoughts that in us play
 To nervous motion in the brain.
 To problems vexed I find the key
 By deftly noting year by year,
 The strange phenomena we see,
 When the machine is out of gear !

"There is no soul !" the sceptics cry !
 "Intelligence will pass away !
 A *function* merely—it must die
 When 'night rounds off life's little day !'

There is no *proof* of aught beside,
No room for *soul* within the frame,
We probe in vain, on every side,
And find it but an idle name ! ”

Ah ! shallow fools ! If you would *know*
There is an “ *Ego* ” in the man,
Let all these narrow notions go,
And for awhile, withhold your ban !
Wait till this marvellous machine
Works wrongly—when mysterious gleams
Of soul or spirit may be seen
In trance, or in delirium’s dreams !

These are the themes that round me weave
Their potent irresistless spell,
I know “ *I am* ” and I *believe*
God rules my *spirit* ! It is well !—
The riddles of the world of *sense*
Are wrapt in mists of doubt and sin,
And so I turn my footsteps hence,
And calmly, humbly, look within !

THE LAST FAREWELL !

So, it has really come at last,
That parting which I held in dread,
What time with free elastic tread,
Across Life’s sunny fields I passed !

That hour which still was stealing on
With stealthy step, though all the while,
With roving eyes and careless smile,
I posed as Pleasure's myrmidon.

When at their best and brightest were
The blossoms that above me hung,
In those old days when we were young,
And this grey world exceeding fair ;

Then, often, like a glimpse of gloom
Beyond bright skies discerned afar,
Would visions of this parting mar
My paradise of bliss and bloom !

Yes, darling, in that long ago
When we went maying hand in hand ;
And dancing down a summer land
All flooded with a golden glow,

E'en then, though both our hearts were light,
And love was mirrored in your eyes,
Would sometimes fall athwart the skies
The shadow of the coming night.

And now, that shadow deepens fast
Within this chamber ; and they seem
To melt into a mocking dream—
Those halcyon memories of the past,

That smiling summer land of yore
Is now a weary waste of snow.
I hear the blasts across it blow ;
Their burden still is "Nevermore !"

That loving hand, so warm and white,
Which now is prisoned in my own,
Will soon lie comfortless—*alone*
My soul must go into the night !

My darling ! Nestle closer yet
To this exhausted feeble frame.
Let me be sure it is the same—
The old—the only Margaret !

Yes ! Those are Margy's eyes of grey—
The deep clear wells of other days.
Most sweet and steadfast is their gaze
As in those summers far away.

I mused alone a month ago,
As twilight deepened into night,
And calmly in the dying light
I marvelled at my lot below.

How rich my argosy of bliss !
My bark steered by an angel hand
O'er life's wild sea towards that strand
Which tranquil shining waters kiss !

And who was I that God above
Should dower me with wealth untold ?
No splendid argosy of gold,
But one unselfish woman's love !

I glanced around the cosy room,
Marked each familiar feature there,
The treasured volumes everywhere,
The crystal vases gay with bloom.

And then in fancy came to me
The empty chair—the idle pen—
As you will see them, darling, when
Your dying Love has ceased to be.

Upon the dear old desk still lies
The ode I meant for you alone,
Begun on earth, but, oh, my own,
It will be finished in the skies !

And on the morrow you will glide
Into that darkened chamber, Love,
While I shall watch you from above,
Or even linger by your side.

For though I shall have done with Time
Before yon flaming sun has set,
Our spirits will be fettered yet
By links mysterious and sublime.

And, Margy, when my soul has fled,
Let those two vases still be gay
With dewy bloom from day to day,
To draw bright thoughts around the dead.

Within my chair you will recline
Inhaling odours rare and dense,
Till with their subtlety the sense
Is drugged, as with delicious wine.

And those white arms will lightly rest
Where mine have rested ; and a dream
Of dead delights will wake a gleam
Of sunshine in your darkened breast.

For, though those happy hours have fled
For ever—sunshine warmer yet
Anon shall clasp us, Margaret,
Where parting tears are never shed.

This thought from pain shall bring release
As you look forth with streaming eyes
Upon the wild distempered skies,
And in your bosom will be—Peace !

Now I must sleep, but ere I die,
I ask your pardon, stricken bird,
For many a hasty, angry word
That I have breathed in days gone by.

I recked not in that thoughtless time,
How cruel was the shaft I sped ;
But on the threshold of the dead
I do not dare to gloss my crime.

I am forgiven—it is well—
But oh, my darling, weep no more
For one who nears a radiant shore,
Whereon our loved and lost ones dwell.

How dark it grows ! Come closer yet—
The music of a summer sea ;
It singeth of the past and thee ;
The wavelets whisper, “ Margaret ! ”

* * * *

I see you dimly—feel your hand—
 But you seem very far away,
 I drift from darkness into day—
 The daylight of the Morning Land !

I see you not—all spirit now—
 I am all dazzled by the light. ¹
 Fair clouds of angels are in sight—
 A glory shines about my brow—

But though life's fervid dream is past,
 My voice may haply reach your ear,
 So from these regions, calm and clear,
 I waft you one "Good-night"—the last !

DREAMS—PAST AND PRESENT.

IN tranquil visions of the night
 I see the swirling stream,
 And mark a spectral Halcyon's flight,
 Where golden flags do gleam !
 The morrow comes—I stand alone
 Knee deep in tender grass,
 My happy dream is still my own
 For all has come to pass !

There, blooms beneath my very feet
 By vernal breezes fanned
 The speedwell and the meadow-sweet
 I saw in Fairy-land !

There shine the marigolds so gay,
Their fire dashed with rain,
That wooed me wandering far way
In Dreamland's dim domain

The drooping boughs—the foliage fair,
The fleecy summer sky,
The laughing waters—all are there
In sweet reality !
And more enchanting far the scene
Than in my slumbers light,
Then all was shadowy, I ween,
Now all is fresh and bright !

But as the seasons onward roll,
From Memory's page will fade
That lavish wealth of green and gold,
That cool sequestered glade !
Those rushes nodding on the brim,
The windings of the stream,
Will grow as indistinct and dim
As in the vanished dream !

In *pre-existence*, haply we,
In dreams *this* world surmised,
And at our birth awoke to see
Our visions realized !
Then might have come to us in sleep,
Foreshadowings—who can say ?
Of those green vales—yon azure deep
That sweeps our shores to day !

But in our slumbers of the past,
 We saw them through a haze
 Whilst *now* their glory gilds at last,
 The measure of our days !

So when our earthly course is run,
 And we are lulled to rest,
 To wake in realms beyond the sun,
 "The islands of the Blest !"
 The beauties of the earth and sky
 May seem as dim and far
 As in those visions long gone by,
 In some refulgent star !

Who knows not those sensations keen
 That mystify the brain ?
 The dancing rill—the sylvan scene—
 The lonely leafy lane !
 They seem *familiar* to the eye,
 A dream of long ago,
 It was beneath another sky
 We saw those lilies blow !
 That vista reaching far away,
 Not wholly strange appears,
 It met the view some other day
 Far back amid the years !

The smile upon an infant's face,
 As hushed in sleep it lies
 Philosophers may seek to trace
 'Mid minor mysteries !

But all the depths of human lore,
And each scholastic wile,
Alas ! are powerless before
The secret of that smile !

For no impressions brought by *sense*,
And recombined in dreams,
Can move the sleeping innocence,—
Yet may the babe have gleams.
Of some fair home far, far away,
In some mysterious sphere,
Do they provoke the smiles that play
Upon his features *here* ?

It is a problem strange and dim
Whose key is kept above,
The mystery is plain to *Him*,
That God of endless love !

THE FIRST DISCORD !

THE joyance of the honeymoon
Lit up their matrimonial sky,
For *them* its end came all too soon,
The days had sped so sweetly by !
For whether roaming on the shore
Within the reach of silver spray,
Their voices blending with the roar
Of foam-capped billows in their play,

Or whether buried in the gloom
 Of some lone valley dim and deep,
 Amid a wealth of darkened bloom,
 A Lotus Land of silken sleep !
 They knew no world beside the one
 In which they seemed to live alone,
 And *all* for *them* the mighty sun
 Would mount each morn his golden throne

Faint echoes from the noisy sphere
 Did reach the portals of their nest
 And broke all softly on the ear,
 Lulled by the ocean's wild unrest !
 At length they wakened from their dream
 To find their barque so trim and true,
 Afloat upon the sunny stream,
 Amid a crowd of craft they knew !

* * * *

A garden party—shallow mirth—
She breaking hearts against her will
 Their whilom Eden turned to earth
 Where jealousy was stalking still !
 At home he turned upon his bride,
 A strange stern glitter in his eyes,
 “You never would have left my side,”
 He cried—“had I been only wise !

Ah fool ! It had been better far
 Had your rash lips been sealed by death,
 For dimmed is life's auspicious star
 And love is blasted by a breath !

That harmony you knew before,
Might have rolled on from spring to spring ;
But *now* 'tis marred for evermore,
And none can mend the broken string !
She was indeed a *perfect* wife,
Who on her lord did madly dote,
And in the music of their life,
He struck the first discordant note !

A WEIRD DREAM.

A VAST expanse of mellowed light,
Beneath a dome of gold,
And as the waning day took flight,
I stood there—mute and cold !
The words “A holy war ! Oh, fly !”
Were hissed into my ear,
No speaker passed before my eye,
But yet I *felt* him near !
Again all hushed—with bated breath,
And wildly beating heart,
I seemed to dally long with Death,
Unable to depart !
At length the massive doors were thrown
Wide open, and one said,
“A holy war ! The trump is blown !
Down, Christians ! to the dead !”

P

I fled on Fear's mysterious wings
 Between those gates, at last,
 Whilst swarms of horrid human things
 Swept by me, as I passed !

Then on a plain I seemed to stand,
 Where silent solemn hosts
 Stretched far away on either hand,
 Unnumbered sheeted ghosts !

These were the dusky ranks of Death,
 Their winding-sheets they wore,
 They chilled me with their icy breath,
 These shades from Pluto's shore !

And then I saw my wife and child,
 Beside me on the plain,
 The infant's face was white and wild,
 His mother's racked with pain !

Oh God ! That haggard baby brow !
 Those frightened tearless eyes !
 Their horror haunts me even *now*
 Beneath the laughing skies !

"Be brave !" His noble mother said,
 "Your parents both are nigh,
 And show the cohorts of the dead,
 How bravely *you* can die !"

For Death was coming thro' the gloom
 To *all* of us, I knew,
 And linked too was our fearful doom
 With that unearthly crew !

* * * * *

But then I started up to see
My wife's face flushed with joy,
And merrily ran up to me
My lovely laughing boy !

NEAR FINGLE BRIDGE ON THE TEIGN.

YE, who are chained these sultry days
To desk and ledger, little deem
How winsome are the winding ways
In June, by Teign's impetuous stream !

Would that a vision dimly fair
Could steal across your wearied sight,
Of this delicious valley where
The beeches make a softer night !

Where through the pleasant tender gloom,
A purple haze afar is seen,
That tells me where the blue-bells bloom
Beneath the overarching screen.

Where mellow sunbeams streaming through
The boughs, made mingled light and shade,
Where all day long the ring-doves coo,
And music floats across the glade !

* * * * *

Lulled by the river's song, I stood
 But yesterday in such a spot,
 Alone and silent in the wood,
 With blue-bell and forget-me-not.

"THE COACHING SEASON!"

THE merry coaches, now once more
 Bear many a sprightly load
 For, like the highwaymen of yore,
 They've "*taken to the road!*"

Their Jehus skilful are and *bold*,
 The teams are smart, I swear.
 "None but the *brave*," 'twas said of old,
 "Ever deserve the *fare*."

One class would readily forego
 This pastime—and with reason—
 Our *youths*, though full of *pluck*, we know,
 Detest the "*Coaching Season!*"

A SONG (FOR MUSIC).

THE blythe lark sings on exultant wings,
 And I love his music well,
 While the streamlet's song, as it shoots along,
 Makes melody in the dell.

But sweeter than brooklet or bird to me
Is the dreamy roar
On the lonely shore,
The mystic song of the mighty sea !

For the fickle bird is no longer heard
When the swift storm sweeps the sky !
And the merry rill will anon be still,
For summer may see it dry !
But the anthem vast on the wild sea-shore,
Now loud—now low
As a voice I know,
Will roll on grandly for evermore !

“ AFTER.”

AFTER the tempest the rainbow gay,
After the gloaming the hush of night,
After the shower the sparkling spray,
After Cimmerian darkness—light.

After the winter the jocund spring,
After the flower the fruitage fair,
After the wooing the bridal ring,
After the shattered dream—despair.

After the seed-time the golden grain,
After day's glamour the crimson west,
After the drought the refreshing rain,
After the hour of labour—rest.

After the hurricane calm awhile,
 After black heavens, clouds of fleece,
 After the tear-drops a sunny smile,
 After the shadowy river—peace.

A RIFLEMAN'S SONG,

Air—"When all the world is young, lad.

WE Riflemen of England,
 Are marksmen bold and true
 We love our trusty weapon,
 And we can use it too !
 Our tents, so trim and snowy,
 Dot Wimbledon's fair plain ;
 We brave nights dark and blowy,
 And reck not of the rain.

All day before the targets
 Right sturdily we stand,
 Whilst tidings of our prowess
 Are flashed across the land.
 We sing, and weave the story,
 When day's bright course is run,
 Then dream of England's glory,
 And deeds of valour done !

ALEXANDER II.

OBIT 13TH MARCH, 1881.

ABOVE the Northern capital afar,
 The baleful glitter of that fateful star

Struck terror to the souls of those whose eyes
Were bent in awe upon the midnight skies.
Saw *he* that star, who has been summoned home
To some fair region in that trackless dome ;
Whose earthly casket may be maimed and torn,
But on whose soul has drawnd a brighter morn ?
And if he saw it, was it fraught with doom ?
A funeral light that glimmered o'er his tomb ?
We cannot tell ; but by that muffled toll
We learn that to a ghostly muster-roll,
Another name—the highest in his land—
Has now been added by that spectral hand !
We feel that he who sought, whilst here, to trace
The spirit's flight, now standeth face to face
With the Immortals on some sinless zone,
“ Knowing as even he himself is known.”

TRANCE !

DEAD ! Dead ! Dead !
She lies in her narrow bed,
They wrapped her an hour ago
In a solemn shroud of snow,
And their tones were hushed and low !
They stole with a noiseless tread
Around the fair young dead,
Laying violet blooms at her head,
And amaranth blooms at her feet,

Then crossing, as it was meet,
 Her hands on her bosom sweet,
 They left her, my brightest and best,
 A maiden in perfect rest !

One kiss—one look—and then she slid
 From sight, the ebon coffin lid
 I heard them fasten down from far,
 Whilst looking at the evening star.

But I return, and in a dream,
 From night until the earliest gleam
 Of morn, I sit beside my bride,
 Who sleeps on soundly by my side.

Still I keep my vigil holy
 By her couch so lone and lowly,
 Hear, as in a dream, the hearse
 Lumbering up, and see the nurse
 Sable hued, approaching slow,
 With the mutes in garb of woe.

I awake, and I lightly bound
 From my seat ! I had heard a sound
 From beneath the accursed pall,
 And I fiercely call to them all !

“ Help ! Help ! to raise
 The lid ! ” But in wild amaze
 They stared, nor lifted a hand
 At the sound of my swift command !
 And again, and again, and again
 A sound as of stifled pain !

So faint and feeble a moan
It struck on my ears alone !
Then I motioned the mourners back
 With tremulous hands for a space,
And I heard the black cover crack,
 As I wrenched each screw from its place !
One more ! and in my arms she lay
Her wild eyes staring at the day !
She lived ! She breathed ! and faintly came
To that fair face a feeble flame,
As tender tints all slowly streak,
The pallor of her perfect cheek,
Until, at last, she whispered me,
“ Love ! From the dead I come to thee ! ”
Hurrah ! I have cheated well
 The spectre so gaunt and grim,
Hurrah ! Bid him back to hell !
 I have wrested his prey from him !
Hurry the hearse away ! Begone !
Tear the trappings from those that mourn !
Shoulder them swiftly, scarves and pall,
Mutes and mummery, out of the hall !
Off the hearse rattles ! The wheels I hear
 Clattering down the gravel drive,
The mutes may muddle themselves with beer,
 But earth is heaven ! My love's alive !
Wine ! Wine ! Foaming wine !
For my living love in these arms of mine,
Is lying, wreathed in smiles divine ! Hurrah !

TROUTING BY NIGHT.

I.

I STAND beneath the fading sky
 With my good rod in hand,
 The darkening river stealeth by,
 A hush is on the land.
 All noiselessly the swift bats glide,
 Athwart the silent sullen tide,
 Their dusky figures scarce descried.

II.

For the grand watery giants here
 I mean to weave my spell,
 And gentle "rises" greet my ear,
 Whose music charms me well!
 Determined that a trout shall die,
 I send the deadly double fly,
 Across the waters silently!

III.

A sullen plunge that startles night,
 A gallant fish I ween!
 His heavy *pull* attests his might—
 A monster! yet unseen!
 The tardy minutes come and go
 And still my formidable foe
 Is darting wildly to and fro!

IV

At length towards the shelving shore
I draw my weighty prize,
And as I feel the fight is o'er,
I *strain* my eager eyes !
Like silver in the net he gleams,
The spotted tyrant of the streams,
To mingle with my future dreams !

THE FOUR SEASONS OF LIFE.

I.

ALL fresh and fair from the Creator's hand,
By sin unstained, an artless tiny thing,
And day by day we see the mind expand,
A bud unfolding in Life's joyous spring.

II.

The feeble framework now has firmer grown,
Those rounded cheeks are all aglow with mirth,
In gardens gay, the blossom fully blown,
Sways in the breeze that sweeps a fairy earth.

III.

Hope's airy bubbles burst ! we see at length
With many a pang, our summer heavens lower.
But brain and body in their perfect strength,
Have fairly formed the perfect human flower.

IV.

The snows of time are silvering the head,
 The eye is dim, the mellow tones are mute,
 The harvesting is near—the flower dead—
 And death prepares to pluck the ripened fruit.

THE LILY.

THERE are flowers galore in a dell I know,
 That looketh towards the west,
 But of all the fair flowers that in it blow,
 I love the pale lily best !

The violet peeps from its couch of green,
 And bonny it is to see,
 But the stainless bells of the valley's queen
 Are fairer by far to me !

The speedwell, blue as the sky above,
 And the sweet wild-rose are there,
 But they charm me not like my dainty love,
 That scenteth the summer air.

There are flowers galore in that dreamy dale,
 And beautiful all are they,
 But I lost my heart to the lily pale
 In the merry month of May !

CASTLE-BUILDING.

I.

WHAT shadowy architects are they
Who deftly build in air,
Those golden domes at shut of day,
And towers strangely fair?

II.

I reckon not ; but there comes to me
From Fancy's dim domain,
A builder whom I cannot see,
A mason of the brain.

III.

I see him not, but only know
His presence from the grand
And fairy palaces that grow
From his mysterious hand.

IV.

He still builds on : I marvel much
Beneath my mythic sky,
When lo ! all crumbles at the touch
Of stern reality !

AUTUMN.

I.

ALAS ! it *seems* but yesterday
She woke the woodlands into song,
That bonny maiden wreathed with may
Whom we had waited for so long ;

But 'mid her tears *she* smiled adieu
As glowing Summer stole in view ;

II.

Who held high carnival—then fled
Too fickle, in her sister's wake ;
And now a stealthier, softer tread
Is heard amid the faded brake.
A sad sweet presence fills the vale ;
Soft sighs are borne upon the gale.

III.

A melancholy maid, I trow,
Dame Nature's alchemist, who lays
Her wand upon the woods, and lo !
Enchanted seem the winding ways ;
For all the verdure of the wold
She lightly touches into gold.

IV.

But hers that strange unnatural bloom
Which ever whispers of decay,
And hollow murmurs, fraught with doom,
Haunt forest aisles at close of day.
She passes ; Winter soon will blow
His clarion o'er a realm of snow.

(*One and All.*)

BY THE SEA IN NOVEMBER !

A REQUIEM sad are the wild winds tolling,
The ear is lulled by the dreary roar
Of the sounding sea, where the waves are rolling
In white battalions upon the shore !

Never a shaft from the sun to lighten
The chill grey gloom of the darkened day,
Never a random ray to whiten
The gull's fair wing in his airy play !

Ceaselessly, swiftly, the rain is streaming
Adown the side of the clouded pane,
As I sit by an old bow-window, dreaming
Of the dead delights of a Devon lane !
Folk muffled up to defy the weather,
Flitting like phantoms through the mist,
Petticoats—great-coats—both together—
Ladies,—or lunatics,—an' you list !

Here at "The Baths" do we mean to anchor
Our blythe bark for a month at least,
Never can care our spirits canker
Since "Smith" provides a perpetual feast !
Did we not trudge to the "Eastern Station"
This very morning through rain and slush,
Carrying homewards in exultation
Volume on volume full of "gush" ?

Up in the town it is yet more dreary,
Joyless the wares in the window lie,
Even the "belles" looked depressed and weary
As through the mire they hurry by !
Winsome wan faces oft meet the vision,
Wanting Health's honest homely hue ;
Guide-books the climate declare Elysian—
May these frail fairies find it true !

Yet it is fair, is this town so queenly,
 Mounted in state on its throne of sand,
 Who of its merits can e'er think meanly ?
 Offering ozone to all the land !
 Gracefully girt with its pine belt, bringing
 Health with the odours that from it flow,
 Laved by old ocean, sweetly singing
 Mystical echoes of long ago !

THOMAS HOOD.

THE Prince of Punsters, redolent of fun,
 His pencil crowning what his pen begun !
 His quaint word-quibbles and his cranks and quips
 Have charmed the world ; and still about his lips
 We see in fancy humour's lightning play,
 Ere the keen jest had sped upon its way !
 Yet deepest pathos dwelt within his heart ;
 Tear after tear from countless eyes will start,
 And pitying thoughts each gentle bosom throng,
 As they drink in that sweet immortal song,
 Sung in the attic by the sempstress pale—
 Or hear *her* plaint who braved the bleak March gale,
 Beside the ice-cold river. Through the years
 He holds " the keys of laughter and of tears ! "
 Or grave or gay, his workmanship is good,
 And babes unborn will love the name of Hood !

NOW AND AFTER.

To glide like phantoms, here and there,
In ceaseless quest of shadowy things ;
That lure—then vanish into air
On noiseless visionary wings.
To still pursue the same dull round,
With aching hearts, from day to day ;
Chained, like the tortoise, to the ground,
Whilst birds above us wing their way !
To see the dearest and the best
Slip, one by one, into the night
That shrouds the far-off realm of rest,
Where haply “ Faith is lost in sight ! ”
To wince at slander’s venom’d darts,
To see love blighted by a breath ;
O saddened souls ! O weary hearts !
If *this* be Life, how sweet is Death !
To hear the angels whisp’ring low,
To feel the pressure of a hand
That softly lingers as we go
Alone into “ the Silent Land.”
To hear the old familiar hum
Grow fainter yet in dying ears ;
To know the end of pain has come—
The birth of joy—the death of tears !
To fade into the future dim,
Far from “ the fever and the fret ; ”
Beyond the ocean’s western rim,
To follow where the sun has set ;

Q

To hear the grand harmonious roll
 Of seraph song ; to rest from strife ;
 O weary heart ! O saddened soul !
 If *this* be Death, how bitter Life !

NOTHING. .

I stick at nothing in the usual way,
 So this odd theme will sorely tax my brain ;
 But nothing venture, nothing win, they say,
 So what I risk I'm safe to win again.

Do not the dreams of childhood—bright and fair
 Oft end in *this*—hope's hapless heritage ?
 Her rosy bubbles burst, and wan despair,
 Blurs with sad tears the fond imagined page.

This fickle Fortune with unequal hand
 Concedes the pauper—bitter barren dole ;
 But *Dives* lacks it in his palace grand,
 With boundless wealth to satisfy his soul,

The miser *gives* it to his fellow-man,
 The bankrupt *saves* it in "the crash of doom,"
 And rich and poor when spent their little span,
 Shall bear it with them to the silent tomb !

DEAN STANLEY.

(IN MEMORIAM.)

No longer through the ancient Nave,
His accents like a silver bell
Shall sound ; the form we loved so well,
Lies hidden in the silent grave.

The *sheath* was slender, but the *soul*
A living sheet of purest fire,
Which now the bright angelic choir
Are wafting onwards to the goal

The eyes of Royalty are wet,
The head of Royalty is bowed,
And through the land a saddened crowd
Mourns him whose star on earth has set.

THE ANGLER'S SOLILOQUY

(AT THE SEASIDE).

THE earth is sad, mists dark and grey
Enfold her ancient breast !
The waves all wearied with their play,
Have trembled into rest !
And silently the God of Day
Is sinking in the West !

Now dead delights like ghosts, arise
 Within my haunted brain !
 The tender blue of April skies,
 The sound of April rain !
 The foaming beck, the gentle rise—
 The princely pounder slain !

* * * * *

Then fade the flowers from my sight,
 And darkened is the stream,
 As yonder, through the waning light,
 The pier lamps faintly gleam !
 And in the drear November night,
 I waken from my dream !

ALFRED JINGLE.

(A SKETCH.)

CLEARLY a member of the Sharpers' Guild,
 Of middle height, and rather slender build ;
 His tight green coat whose palmy days are o'er,
 Graced—it would seem—a shorter man of yore !
 An ancient stock without a sign of shirt,
 And scant black trousers much begrimed with dirt !
 These last o'er very shabby shoes strapped tight,
 Do not conceal the wretched hose from sight.
 A battered hat surmounts his long black hair,
 His gloves are truly much the worse for wear !

Yet we must own his panoply decayed
Is quite in keeping with this rakish blade,
Upon whose shrewd yet thin and haggard face
A cool assurance we can plainly trace—
A jaunty impudence that ever plays
About its lines, recalling better days !—
Surely a knave who finds unconscious tools
For his designs mid unsuspecting fools !
Who blessed with brass, combined with common sense,
Contrives to live at other folks' expense.
Disjointed scraps of jargon from him flow,
And well he draws a rather lengthy bow !—
Unwashed—unscrupulous—unkempt—undone—
Decayed Gentility's Unblushing Son !

“AND BEAUTY DRAWS US WITH A SINGLE
HAIR.”—POPE.

I.

My Flo' is fair, with flowing hair,
That sweeps her snowy shoulders ;
And we had roamed where Avon foamed
Amid its giant boulders !
The woodlands were alive with song—a western wind
did blow—
“Full fine should be a lady's line !” exclaimed my
Fairy Flo' !

II.

She drew a thread from golden bed—
 A truant tress—resplendent,—
 She made it tight with fingers white,
 From line it fluttered pendent.
 The feathered wile she wed to it—her cheeks were all
 aglow,
 As to the margin flitted she—that lissome Fairy Flo'.

III.

I stood apart, with beating heart—
 She might have dropped from Heaven !
 Such witching guise ! Such laughing eyes !
 Her years but three times seven.
 Then fell the fly, as softly as a feath'ry flake of snow.
 "A rise ! A rise ! He's mine !" she cries—that win-
 some Fairy Flo'.

IV.

She pulled him out—that silly trout,
 In gold and crimson glowing.
 A captive meet, for captor sweet,
 With tresses fair and flowing !
 So with a single hair was drawn this tiny trout, I trow—
 "And Beauty drew him, didn't she ?" cried arc
 exultant Flo'.

V.

Poor trout ! thy snare was maiden hair,
 Which still was bent on capture !

That golden chain did snare a swain,
Who hugged his chains with rapture !
“ More foolish than the trout,” she laughed. “ *You*
never *tried* to go ! ”
And thus *I*, too, was fairly grassed, by that triumphant
Flo' !

SONG.

(FOR MUSIC.)

I WILL not follow the swallow when he flies to the south
countree,
For the woodlands old in their garb of gold, are a glory
and joy to me.
Nor will I follow the redwing who foolishly shapes his
flight
For the northern zone that is all his own, when the
violets steal in sight.
So do not tempt me, swallow ! from faded brake and
hollow !
Too fair the spring-time, redwing ! I cannot, cannot
follow !
For I cling to the dear little island the more that the
seasons wane,
And I love too well all the sweets that dwell in the
heart of an English lane !
So the dearest wish that is left me now is to pass to the
“ Silent Land ”
With my native skies in my dying eyes, and pressing
a loving hand !

So do not tempt me, swallow ! from faded brake and
hollow !

Too fair the spring-time, redwing ! I cannot, cannot
follow !

CREMATION—(A PLEA FOR).

Why let our "Corpora Vilia" fly,
Like dust thro' the depths of the deep blue sky,
In very poisonous particles ?
Why let them rot in the churchyard lone,
Beneath a slab of unsightly stone,
Till *bodies*, in *life* so quickly known,
Become "*indefinite articles*" ?

From the living sufficient risk we run
From the knife, or the skulking villain's gun
(The thought of it spoils digestion !)
That the Dead should be ready to do their share
Of slaying, by scattering everywhere
The seeds of Death in the fields of air,
Becomes a very *grave* question !

A Burning Question ! It is, forsooth ;
And those who shall *urn* their dead, in truth,
Shall *earn* our approbation !
The germs of Death shall dissolve away
Before the fire's resistless sway ;
And we treasure *ashes* instead of *clay*,
We votaries of Cremation

A Prelate thinks that this rite will throw
A doubt on the minds of high and low
Of national resurrection !
But if a shark in the southern sea,
Was to gulp down bodily luckless me,
Where then would the *ultimate atoms* be ?
So much for "my lord's" objection.

The ¹ "Moulds" may abuse us if they please,
These Ghouls will shriek for their wonted fees !
(The case has been fairly stated).
Our dead shall rest in the warm bright room,
And the vase will whisper no thought of gloom ;
Whilst the sundered couple, beyond the tomb,
Will verily be (C)*re-mated* !

PRESIDENT GARFIELD.

(IN MEMORIAM.)

A DIRGE is born across the deep,
There is a wailing in the West !
As saddened subjects slowly sweep
Past their dead Ruler's dreamless rest.

A vision steals upon my sight,
Illumined by a cold, white glare,
Of that draped catafalque by night,—
The spectral trees—the mourners there !

¹ The Undertakers, *vide* "Martin Chuzzlewit."

But through the cypress boughs the dawn
 Anon will break, athwart the gloom.
 Two nations' mighty hearts are drawn
 Together o'er the hero's tomb !

(*Society, a Prize Poem.*)

THE ANCIENT COTTER !

I MET him but the other day
 In our most lovely lane,
 An ancient cotter, gaunt and grey,
 A toothless ragged swain !
 His jaws were sunk, his eye was dim,
 His heavy head was bent—
 I spoke, as was my wont, to him,
 As on his staff he leant.
 He answered in a stupid way—
 Words fitting such as he !
 I thought how vast a barrier lay
 Between this man and me !
 For I could boast a cultured mind,
 God's smile illumed my face ;
 But here was nothing but a hind—
Sans sense, or wit, or grace !
 A gleam shot through his dull grey eyes,
 His fingers clutched my dole,
 And then beneath the pitying skies
 Crawled on that sottish soul !
 I went my way and held my head
 Aloft in conscious pride—

“ Ah, what a gulf there yawns ! ” I said,
“ How infinitely wide !
Between this animated clod,
Half cousin to yon swine,
And one who bears the stamp of God
Upon his brow divine !
No sound of earth or from the sky
Has meaning in his ears,
Whilst all *my* being is shaken by
The music of the spheres ! ”

* * * * *

And *now* he holds the golden key
To portals vast and dim—
The deep oppressive Mystery
Is all laid bare to *him* !
’Tis *I* who, blind and fettered, move
That ferny lane along,
Whilst he is list’ning far above,
To soft seraphic song !

THE CLOSE OF THE TROUTING SEASON.

THE season is over and done, boys,
It has flown like a pleasant dream.
Farewell for awhile to the fun, boys,
And the swirl of the saucy stream.
For the woods are brown, and the leaves are down,
Whilst the weary winds are wailing ;
Yet ho, boys, ho, we may try a throw,
Across the enchanting grayling.

236 *SKETCHES IN PROSE AND VERSE.*

The trout must be given grace, boys,
They showed us a merry time,
In stickle, and pool, and race, boys,
Ah me ! But the sport was prime !
But the year grows old, and the skies are cold,
With Boreas loudly railing !
Yet ho, boys, ho, we may try a throw,
Across the enchanting grayling.

And when the good rod's at rest, boys,
Along with the well-worn creel,
We'll dream of the sport at its best, boys,
And the click of the running reel.
As we musing gaze at the ruddy blaze,
When the old year's strength is failing,
One glass we'll drain to the trout we've slain,
And one to the dainty grayling.

TROUT ANGLER'S SONG.

I.

STERN winter is over—ablaze is the vale
With the golden Lent lilies we anglers all love ;
The violet's fragrance is scenting the gale,
And soft fleecy cloudlets are sailing above !
Then, brothers, away ! We can promise you fun
With the merry March Brown and the bonny blue Dun !

II.

The fishing-boots staunch from the toe to the heel,
 Invite us, my brothers, to don them again.
Pull down yonder weather-stained wonderful creel,
 And look up the flies that so often have slain !
Then, brothers, away ! We can promise you fun
With the merry March Brown and the bonny blue Dun !

III.

Now on with your hat which the collars entwine,
 And draw from its cover your favourite rod !
Next pocket your winch with its waterproof line,
 And step gaily riverwards over the sod.
Yes, brothers, away ! We can promise you fun
With the merry March Brown and the bonny blue Dun !

IV.

Hurrah ! for the swirl of the streamlet once more !
 'Tis just the right tint, and the wind's in the west.
A pounder—"first blood !"—drag him slowly to shore !
 A tap on the head, and your beauty's at rest !
Then, brothers, away ! We can promise you fun
With the merry March Brown and the bonny blue Dun !

V.

Then on by the stream, casting hither and there,
 Your ears charmed with song, and your cheeks all
 aglow !

Till your creel is a burden right heavy to bear,
 And wearily, cheerily, homewards you go !
 Then, brothers, away ! We can promise you fun
 With the merry March Brown and the bonny blue Dun !

CYPRESS AND ORANGE BLOSSOM !

We heard the music of the bells,
 The marriage-bells that rent the air,
 And from the heart of England wells
 The heartiest wishes for the pair !
 Gay streamers flutter in the blast,
 And happy people throng the mart,
 But grizly death is stalking fast
 Towards them with uplifted dart !

The bride is fair—the prince is young—
 The dawn of wedded life is bright ;—
 Their praises leap from every tongue,
 And none can know the coming night !
 But, 'mid the orange blossoms gay
 That deck'd the graceful girlish head,
 There lurked a shadowy cypress spray
 Grown in the garden of the dead.

Too soon the dire news is known !
 The sister of the bonnie bride
 Unto a fairer land had flown,
 To spend a happier Whitsuntide !

A moment the bereaved one's eyes,
With blinding bitter tears are dim,
And then a sunbeam lifts her skies,
As she clings closer still to *him*.
But now the revelling is done
And those same silvery joy-bells toll
Their requiem for a course that's run—
Their dirge for a departed soul !
Strip off those vestments gay to see !
The orange blossoms lay aside !
For Death has marred our jubilee,
And crossed the pathway of the Bride !
Now let us draw the veil across
The silent woe—the inner pain,—
Whilst grieving o'er the sister's loss
We feel it is the other's gain !
Like morning clouds these shadows dark
Will in the distance melt away,
Soon will their matrimonial bark
Drift out again into the Day !

THE MAIDEN AND THE MISTLETOE.

THE lady fair holds high in air
A dainty spray to tease her beau,
But then her pet, with teeth sharp set,
May prove a formidable foe !
Oh, cruel belle ! oh, luckless swell !
The mistletoe ! the mistletoe !

It seems to say, that slender spray,
 "Oh, try those coral lips below!"
 But will he dare the "savage" there,
 Who growls a most decided "No?"
 Oh, cruel belle! oh, hapless swell!
 The mistletoe! the mistletoe!

Still held aloft, 'twixt fingers soft,
 Above her tresses' golden glow,
 It works a spell that soon will quell
 The fleeting fear of furious "Flo!"
 Oh, winsome belle! oh, timid swell!
 The mistletoe! the mistletoe!

A sudden rush! a crimson blush!
 The spaniel dropt in haste, and lo!
 The sweets are won; the deed is done:
 He should have done it long ago.
 Oh, bonny belle! oh, lucky swell!
 The mistletoe! the mistletoe!

GHOSTS

Nor when the Sunbeams smite the smiling land,
 Or lightly tremble on the restless deep,
 But when pale Silence with uplifted hand
 Serenely summons her sweet sister—Sleep.

Then do they steal from Night's mysterious womb,
 And earthwards glide with rapid noiseless tread,
 To whisper low the secrets of the tomb,
 In mortal ears at midnight's hour dread.

Some they may visit with a saintly smile,
Upon a mission mystic yet sublime,
Or darker phantoms in some ruined pile,
May re-enact their long-forgotten crime.

JULY.

JULY is with us—the full fierce glory
Of glowing summer is yet to come !
But not again till the year is hoary
Will warblers waken that now are dumb ;
The birds are mute and the wind reposes,
The landscape sleeps in a sultry haze,
The bee hums drowsily 'mid the roses
And we dream on through the golden days.

The modern Babylon's reign is over,
Her sons and daughters have taken wing
To cool green meadows of purple clover,
Through which meanders the crystal spring.
The gas-ridden rooms they have left behind them,
And crowd no more on the horrid stair—
You must hie to some Devonshire lane to find them,
Where the ferns are fresh and the flowers fair.

On trim green lawns our “ belles ” give battle
To men with the racquet and bloodless ball,
On the summer wind floats their airy prattle,
And the ringdoves up in the fir-woods call.

R

On the swirling stream in the witching gloaming
 The angler throws his seductive fly—
 Through sylvan solitudes slowly roaming,
 We list to the nightingale—Maud and I !

On sand and shingle, beside the ocean,
 The children sport—and the maiden dreams ;
 The waves roll in with a rhythmic motion,
 And the gull's white wing in the sunlight gleams,
 Others will ride o'er the foaming billows,
 And cool their brows in the soft salt spray,
 Whilst hardier spirits will press their pillows,
 On heather-clad Highland far away !

The dog-days on us are slowly coming ;
 July will pass, and Saint Grouse be seen !
 But now we are lulled by the bees' soft humming,
 And the shade of the roses is sweet, I ween.
 O vex us not, ye incessant workers,
 And do not mar our blissful sleep :
 Just now we are free—and perforce are lurkers,
 Where the winds are cool and the shade is deep !

THE ANGLER'S DREAM.

I.

THE night was cold—a “nipping air !”
 I looked into the blaze,
 And saw some long-lost faces there,
 My friends of other days !

Then seemed to stand beside a stream,
 Whilst yet the year was young ;
And sweetly in the Land of Dream
 A tender throstle sung.

II.

The flowers of spring were blooming nigh,
 The beck was white with foam,
And deftly did I cast my fly
 Into the troutlets' home !
They madly dashed at the deceit,
 For they were blythe and bold ;
But soon they glistened at my feet,
 Arrayed in red and gold !

III.

The welkin rang with softest song,
 White cloudlets swam above ;
As I moved dreamily along,
 The earth seemed full of Love !
I saw the marigold's fierce fire,
 And felt the scented gale,
And still the throstle did not tire
 Within that haunted vale !

IV.

Anon a pool lurked dark and deep,
 Where lights and shades did play,
And then my fly, with airy sweep,
 Was sped upon its way !

A sudden plunge that tried my art,—
 A lusty trout—no doubt !
 Then did I waken with a start
 To find the fire—out !

MEMORIES OF THE DEAD.

It is not when the Sun is riding high,
 That they start
 From the dim and dusky caverns where they lie,
 In the heart !
 But when the day is dying,
 And birds are homeward flying,
 And evening winds are sighing,
 Then they come !

They rise then through the mists of many years
 That are dead,
 And we see them through a shining veil of tears
 That we shed !
 Some are young, and others hoary,
 All their faces wreathed with glory,
 And to tell a bygone story,
 Do they come !

Their eyes, though seeming brighter than of yore
 Speak of love ;
 And in silence do they beckon to that shore,
 Far above !

In them our souls are folden,
As in the years now olden,
Then in the sunset golden,
Do they fade !

AL FRESCO.—A SUMMER MEMORY.

WHO wants to stay in a stuffy room
When the days are long ;
When he can nestle in banks of bloom
That are wreathed with song ?
Who'd look at the ceiling, who has the sky
For a glorious purple canopy,
With the birds and the breeze for minstrelsy
Never I. Not I.

That day I looked o'er a yellow sea
Of the dancing grain ;
Though never a sail shines fair and free
On that mimic main.
Yet o'er its bosom did light winds blow,
Swaying the slim stalks to and fro,
Revealing the beautiful blooms that grow
In the depths below.

Down into the depths of that sea of gold
Did I sometimes gaze ;
For there were treasures of hues untold
In its winsome ways.

The knautia's purple gleam shot through
 Its billows, along with the speedwell's blue,
 And the scarlet flag of the poppy too
 Flashed upon the view.

But worn at length with the scorching heat,
 And the blinding glare,
 I sought the shade of a dim retreat,
 And I rested there.

My lips I cooled with some Rhenish wine
 In a natural bower of eglantine,
 While the west wind whispered of bliss divine
 In those ears of mine.

For music flowed from a beck at hand,
 And the belted bees,
 Those rare musicians, became my band
 As I took my ease.

The mullein's sceptre of gold, it lay
 Close by ; 'twas fit for a king to sway,
 And I almost *felt* like a king that day
 As a dreamer may.

IN MEMORIAM.—ARCHIBALD CAMPBELL
 TAIT.

OBIIT, 3RD DECEMBER, 1882.

WITH sinking hearts we heard that solemn toll
 Which broke the wintry silence of the sky,
 We seemed to see fair clouds of angels fly,
 For ever higher, with a ransomed soul.

Far down the dusky reaches of the past,
Come floating whispers of the princely sway,
Of bygone Primates, long since passed away,
Whose troubled lot in stormier times was cast.

Now Death has raised his gaunt mysterious hand,
And beckoned to the purest of them all ;
Death's part is done, the spirit mocks his thrall,
And wings its way towards "The silent land,"

To-day in the great mother's kindly breast,
Strong loving hands the dull cold clay will place
Between the sacred relics of his race,
But *He* is "where the weary are at rest."

AT THE CONCERT IN THE DOME,

27TH NOVEMBER 1882.

ENTHRONED in the balcony, musing I took
The glasses that work such a spell,
And settled myself for a critical look
At the lads—and the *lasses* as well !
My fingers but move for a moment—and then
Each face, that was erstwhile so dim,
With strange perspicuity into my ken
Did stealthily, silently swim !

A lady who loomed in the distance just now,
Seen hazily, as in a dream,
Shone clear as the day—o'er her beautiful brow
Some tresses had strayed, it would seem ;

I could see the soft curves of her exquisite nose,
 Her dimples could count as they lay
 In her cheeks—ah ! their pillow was soft as a rose,
 And as fair as the blossoms of May !

Reversing my fingers, that lady so bright
 Once more from my view faded fast,
 As a face we adored, when long passed from the sight,
 Is whelmed in dark Lethe at last !
 But memory's magic—when no one is by—
 May summon the shades from their tomb,
 With fancy's weird aid ; till they flash on the eye
 In all their original bloom !

AT BRIGHTON.

(IN JANUARY.)

FROM where I sit I hear the winter ocean
 Breaking in mournful cadence on the shore,
 Its billows rolling in with stately motion,
 And ever whisp'ring " Never ! Nevermore ! "

The wild north-easter sweeps the floor of heaven,
 And finds meet music in that sullen roar ;
 On Fancy's ear steal warmer winds of Devon,
 But I may hear them " never—nevermore ! "

Now Phoebus shoots his subtle shafts of splendour,
 That wail seems far less dreary than before ;
 Old Ocean's voice, methinks, has grown more tender,
 But *still* it whispers " Never ! Nevermore ! "

Brighton awakes—a stream of living glory
Floods the grey ocean's ever-heaving floor,
But still its children lisp the old, old story,
That solemn warning—"Never ! Nevermore !"

ON THE BRIDGE.

It was young Robin and his love
Stood on a bridge at evensong,
Night's countless lamps were lit above—
Below, the streamlet slid along.
Across the rail she lightly leant,
And gazed into the quiet stream,
Wherein she saw, with deep content,
The buried stars—their reflex gleam—
But never stars were half so bright,
As Elsie's eyes that summer night.

Around her taper waist, an arm—
Her lover's—amorously lay,
In place and hour there lurked a charm
That owned no kinship to the day !
Familiar sounds upon the gale
Were gently wafted to the ear,
And from the darkness of the vale
The love-born mavis fluted clear—
But sweeter than the song he sung,
The words that trembled on her tongue !

The shadows deepen in the dell,
 Weird bats athwart the water play,
 And on the fitful night-breeze swell
 The village church bells far away !
 Through all the windings of the glade
 The stately trees like phantoms stand,
 Whilst love was leading man and maid
 Far onwards into fairy-land !
 And neither had on earth a part
 Save only in the other's heart !

Anon from yonder wooded ridge
 The cold moon climbs the blue expanse ;
 She glorifies the rustic bridge,
 Her beams upon the brooklet dance.
 She softly winds about the twain
 The radiance of her liquid light,
 As though, for lovers she would fain
 Create a fairer day from night !
 Her silver signet, nothing loth,
 She sets upon their plighted troth !
(Chambers' Journal.)

AFTER THE BATTLE.

No more is blown the bugle from the hill,
 The cattle rest amid the fields once more ;
 Again we hear the music of the mill—
 The din and fury of the fight are o'er !

But where are they, the valiant and the leal,
Who, all undaunted, faced the foeman's steel,
Whilst shook the sod beneath the cannon's peal?
Gone to their rest !

Beneath yon swelling mounds at peace they lie ;
Soft showers keep their resting-places green ;
Above their graves the zephyrs gently sigh,
And Dian silvers the sequestered scene.
Save these the summer landscape bears no trace
Of war's grim tokens on its smiling face.
God guard these heroes ! for a little space
Gone to their rest !

Where once the turf was drenched with human gore,
The dew-drops sparkle in the morning sun ;
Where erst was heard the deadly conflict's roar,
The mavis fluteth when the day is done.
And straying hither in the hush of night,
When all is flooded with the liquid light,
We think of those—the foremost in the fight—
Gone to their rest !

TO THE LADY BICYCLISTS AT THE
DEVONSHIRE PARK

HITHER and thither they lightly sway
On their delicate steeds of steel,
And strange to see is the rapid play
Of the light revolving wheel ;

Gay are the streamers that flutter free,
 As their winsome way they hold ;
 These sylphs, who shoot o'er an asphalte sea,
 In their guise of black and gold.

Hither and thither they lightly skim,
 Nor pause in their fairy flight,
 And fair, I ween, is each shapely limb,
 As they pass like a flash of light.
 Bicycle belles ! Ye have dazzled the eyes
 And punctured the hearts of men ;
 Your prowess the power of song defies,
 And mocks my enamoured pen.

AT BEACHY HEAD.

WE trod the rugged path with footsteps slow,
 Whilst the blue ocean slumbered far below,
 Upon whose tranquil breast the seagulls lay
 At rest, awearied with their airy play,
 Across whose dimpled depths, on wings of snow,
 The restless ships sped smoothly to and fro.
 Along a ridge that ran confined and steep
 Above the dazzling glory of the deep
 We passed in silence ; whilst a sad refrain
 Was floating upwards from the sunlit main,—
 A dreamy lullaby that rose, and fell
 Upon the ears that loved its music well !

Neptune, that day was in a gentle mood,
No clamour marred his peaceful solitude,
Nor any hostile wind provoked unrest
Within the haven of his ancient breast ;
But all was smiling calm, and quiet glee,
A deep blue heaven, and a summer sea !
Anon, we struck across the Downs, and there
Our pulses quickened in the bracing air,
O'er smooth green spaces sparsely starred with gold
Of prickly gorse, that lit the barren wold.
Up grassy slopes that trend with gentle sweep
Towards the rocky margin of the deep,
We journeyed on ; whilst linnets round us flew,
And carolled all the ditties that they knew :
Sweet moorland choristers who seldom roam
Far from the precincts of their breezy home,
But where the stunted bushes deck the sod,
Rear their young nestlings in the eye of God.
At last 'tis gained—that bleak and lofty Head !
We downward gaze where rolling waters spread
As far as reaches gaze of mortal eye,
Beneath the cloudless azure of the sky—
Behind us lie the Downs—on either side
The steep cliffs rise in their colossal pride,
Whilst sometimes looming through a golden haze
That sunny Isle, where summer long delays,
Will dimly steal upon the raptured sight,
And swell the bosom with a new delight !
Far, far below, the shelving sands appear,
And faintly falls upon the list'ning ear

Soft dreamy music as the wavelets break
 Upon the beach in many a foamy flake.
 The craft that ride upon the ripples, here
 Seem tiny toys ; their snowy sails appear
 No larger than a roving seagull's plume
 Which wafts it lightly o'er the ocean's spume.
 And as I stood upon that glorious day
 Upon the Head, and felt the soft airs play
 Around my brow, and on my heated cheek,
 I felt how great was God ! and ah ! how weak
 The man who saw from that stupendous crest
 The matchless beauty of the sea at rest !

“BABY'S SOCIAL DUTIES.”

“Baby must now have his visiting-card.”—*Vide the World of*
 March 7.

IN his carriage baby goes
 Proudly up and down the street,
 Nestling in serene repose
 On his cosy, cushioned seat !

Baby has no restive horse
 His small chariot to propel,
 But a hand directs its course,
 One that baby knoweth well.

Baby *now* must visits pay
 If he would be *comme il faut* ;
 Social calls his carriage stay,
 Baby has become a beau !

“ Just gone out has tiny Flo’
For an airing with her maid ”—
One of baby’s “ loves,” you know,
One of *many*, I’m afraid !

But our cherub cannot wait,
Others claim his fond regard,
So he leaves, with fitting state
And solemnity, *his card !!!*

“ Master Toddles, Eaton Square,”
That’s the way the card will run ;
But the gossips all declare
“ Master T. is not yet *one* ! ”

A WELCOME TO MAY.

I.

WE gladly greet her, whose face is sweeter
Than any we see in dream,
Her floating tresses the wind caresses,
As far in her wake they stream !
Her blue eyes dancing with mirth entrancing,
Her young cheeks flushed, yet fair,
Scattering flowers around in showers,
Scenting the soft blue air !

II.

The forest hoary is wreathed with glory,
The silence stirred with song,
As through green mazes, knee-deep in daisies,
She merrily sails along !

In sharps and trebles above the pebbles,
 The blythe beck pipes her praise,
 The bees are humming to hail her coming,
 These garish golden days.

III.

Beneath the Larches she proudly marches,
 And lo ! they bloom once more !
 The gay larks love her, and high above her
 Up stairs of song they soar !
 As from dim valleys she softly sallies,
 Young violets brush her feet ;
 The May blooms whiten, her path to lighten,
 And low winds woo my sweet !

IV.

The kingcups golden in pastures olden,
 Feel not her fairy tread,
 Beneath her blushes the wild rose flushes
 Into a pure pale red !
 Through thickets tangled with dew-drops spangled,
 She holdeth her winsome way ;
 This merry maiden with posies laden,
 This bright delicious May.

 THE SOUL'S VOYAGE.

WHEN a sadness gendered of self-disdain
 Broods o'er my spirit like a pall,
 I flee the earth for the mystic main,
 And wander away where the seagulls call,

Where, with low whistle, sad and soft,
They call to each other high in air,
Wheeling so warily far aloft,
Poised upon pinions white and fair.

The waves come in with a solemn roll—
The clear, green waves of the sounding sea—
Flooding my saddened, sunless soul
With their weird and their ancient melody.
That soul, it seemeth to sail away
Athwart the surge, like a faery swan ;
Over the ripples, beyond the day,
Ever it floateth smoothly on !

Diving anon in the cool blue deep,
Threading the aqueous groves below,
Waking the mermaidens out of sleep,
Where the dim, delicate sea-blooms blow.
Rising again to the line of light
That quivers so brightly on ocean's breast,
Dancing away, with enhanced delight,
Onwards—still onwards—towards the west !

Memories olden of days long dead,
Hovering, cloudlike, high above,
The dusky wings of the past outspread
Over the waters the Nereids love !
And fainter yet comes that muffled roll
Of the wild waves washing the distant shore,
To the free, exultant, rejoicing soul
That lightly laughs at their "Nevermore !"

S

A dirge that rises upon the wind,
 And falls anon till it dies away :
 On the marge the *mortal* is left behind,
 But the *soul* sails on to a brighter day !

A SPRING IDYLL.

WE pant for her silver showers,
 To brim all the cups of gold
 Held up by the thirsty flowers,
 That glitter along the wold.
 We long for her gales to bring us
 The fragrance from fairy dell,
 And wait for her birds to sing us
 The songs that we love so well !

For tennis again we're ready,
 We'll battle among the best !
 Though the "Serves" are at first unsteady,
 So long was the Winter's rest.
 The girls with their sweet young faces
 Are throwing their furs away ;
 Our Ethels, and Mauds, and Graces,
 Are fair as the blooms of May !

When the flowers are freshened sweetly
 By the spell of the soft spring rain,
 The lassies will trip it featly
 Across the smooth courts again !

Again will their pleasant laughter
Ring over the lawns we love ;
With the quiet flirtations after,
When Dian rides high above.

THE WORLD WITHOUT WOMEN.

I.

WHAT *should* we do without them, we rough unpolished
clowns,
Who make a dozen blunders to their one,
We really are not competent to face life's ups and
downs,
And often *come to grief* before we've done !
A ship without a rudder is no use,
What good, without a penny, is a purse ?
A *shirt* without a button is the deuce,
But a world without its women would be worse !

II.

Creation would be chaos, and nothing would be right,
Had we no saucy sirens at our sides,
To lecture us and laugh at us from morning until night,
And coax us into claiming them as Brides !
A button to a shirt we'd seldom boast,
Our neckcloths would be constantly awry.
Without the "softer sex" to rule the roast,
The smartest swain would grow into a guy !

III.

Misogynists may sneer at me, pooh-poohing what I say,
 May talk of "the Divinity of *man*,"
 May swear "that silly women are only in the way,"
 And rant, as only women-haters can !
 A tress that is a truant from its nest
 May turn their silly noddles quite distraught,
 A pair of roguish eyes may mar their rest,
 A dimple bring their theories to nought !

IV.

We *men* are *most* susceptible to flattery that falls
 From a winsome witching woman's silvery tongue,
 Her *ridicule* the manly heart especially appeals,
 If the scoffer be but beautiful and young !
 Our petticoated Peris shed a grace
 And a glamour on this world of sober prose.
 Love lurketh in her luxury of lace
 And in the dainty contour of her nose.

V.

Our social angularities they skilfully rub down,
 And cover our *gaucheries* with tact ;
 They gag us with a gesture—they "fix" us with a frown,
 And charmingly exaggerate a fact !
 They bend above the pillow pressed in pain,
 And bathe us in the fragrance of their breath,
 They will cling to us in Paradise again,
 For Love must be triumphant over Death.

THE SICK TOILER IN THE GARRET.

YES, gloomy is my garret, and scanty is my store,
I get but fleeting glimpses of the sun—
It floods the fields with glory ; but never, never more,
May I wander where the bonny children run.
Be the days short, friends, or be they long,
Still *I* must labour till evensong.

A muffled roar of traffic from busy streets below
Ascends into the silence of my room ;
And I often wonder whether the busy people know
I am toiling on, so weary of the gloom.
Would they pity me, that vast throng,
Passing from morning till evensong ?

I only know 'tis Summer because I feel less chill,
And the twilight time so slowly fades away.
I have to toil the longer—the Summer works me ill ;
What to *me* the dewy fragrance of the may ?
Fancy paints flowers *I* may not see,
Blooming afar 'neath the "greenwood tree."

I know it is the Summer because my heavy eyes
Will close from time to time, and in the dark
I catch a sunny vision of deep blue summer skies,
And listen to a visionary lark !
Sapphire skies, and a fairy strain,
A moment—there is my cell again !

I know no sign of Autumn beyond the waning days,
The mornings and the evenings growing cold ;

But I *know* the winds *do* whisper in winsome winding
ways,

All paved with scarlet trophies and with gold.

Gay children trooping, full of glee,

Through the dim vistas barred to *me*.

Grim Winter treats me roughly, but still I love him
best—

The eventide it cometh soonest then ;

All night in Dreamland's valleys I find delicious rest,

The maddest and the merriest of men !

Here for my misery is the meed,

Then I am happy and rich indeed !

“SHALL WE MEET THEM AGAIN?”

SHALL we meet them again—our pets whom we tenderly
cherish,

With the dear shaggy brows, and unspeakable love in
their eyes ?

Can it be that such generous friends can eternally
perish,

Or will they live on in the land where the day never
dies ?

Such love, past expression, must be in its essence
immortal,

Such fealty noble can never be fathered of Time,

But still will shine brightly beyond that mysterious portal
Which leads to the dells of a happier, holier clime.

They share our joys, and they bound when they mark
our gladness,

They know our tones, and they catch our lightness of
heart ;

They share our sorrows, and yearn to dispel our sadness
With looks and caress that can blunt the keen edge of
the dart.

Man turns from us oft with a dubious shrug of the
shoulder

When things go amiss, or when slander's at work in
the dark ;

The dog is staunch still, with a heart that can never wax
colder,

Still leal is the ring of his short irrepressible bark !

We deal him a blow—all unmerited—given in ire ;

He freely forgives, as he lovingly licks our hand ;

For us braves the blast, or the fetterless fury of fire ;

He has but one "love" through the length and the
breadth of the land !

And is love such as *this* to be quenched in a night with-
out ending ?

Shall true friends like these be decreed an ephemeral
fate ?

Ah, no ! they will greet us, with rapture untold, when
we're wending

Our way on to rest through the golden and glorious
gate !

WOODLAND MEMORIES.

I.

WHEN with some witching one we have wandered
 Dreamily through the dim forest aisles,
 O'er love's vagaries have lightly pondered,
 Sunned our heart in her sweetest smiles,
 Felt the soft touch of her fairy fingers,
 Tenderly toyed with some truant tress,
 'Mid the green vistas a spell still lingers,
 Woven, ah me ! by her loveliness.

II.

Yon mossy bank, where the wild rose blushes,
 Into a dainty delicious bloom,
 Swept by the spray of the stream that gushes
 Under the alder's pleasant gloom ;
 Yon swaying hawthorn, whose snows, wind-shaken,
 Silently flutter down leafy ways,
 Soul-stirring dreams of the dead past waken,
 Wreathed with a garland of golden days.

A SHORTEST DAY SCENE.

(SUGGESTED BY RICHARD JEFFERIES' RECENT ARTICLE
 IN THE "ST. JAMES' GAZETTE.")

DRAWS to its death the dull December Day,
 In the far west the pale light fades away,

The leafless tree-tops covered far and nigh
With hardy rooks, that cut the wintry sky
In sable masses ; motionless and dumb,
The dreary twilight would appear to numb
Their cheery “ caws ”—their solemn silent flight
Heralds the advent of the long dark night,
As the grey frost-mists gather with the gloom,
Through freezing vapours indistinctly loom
The dauntless birds, who, spite of icy rain,
Still cling to their aerial domain—
Though the bare boughs be clad in coat of mail,
And bleak blasts blow—The “ Heroes ” do not quail !
While merle and cushat seek a cover dense,
When the keen air proclaims the frost intense.

MEMORY AND MUSIC.

TWIN sisters they, in Time’s fresh childhood born,
And certain heirs of immortality !
When angels chanted to the first fair morn
Those silvery orisons that cannot die,
(But still are wafted to the fancy’s ear,
When silence steeps the vault of blue and gold),
Then, Music floating through the ether clear,
First dropped like dew upon this earth—Behold,
How Memory meshes in her magic net
A tangled maze of bygone hopes and fears,
Some dimmed by misty years, and others yet
Blurred by a film begot of idle tears !

When lo ! we bow to Music's mystic spell,
 Association moveth in her train
 Through those bright meshes we but see too well,
 And the dead past will start to life again !

AU REVOIR.

FAREWELL to the Row and the chairs
 Whose occupants dwindle each day !
 Farewell to the dark stuffy squares,
 Where silence is holding her sway.
 Farewell to the club and the bores,
 To Hurlingham, concert, and drum
 Farewell to the slippery floors,
 For a voice from the country, says " Come."

Away from the dust and the glare,
 Away from the sickening heat ;
 To bathe in exhilarant air
 Where the breath of the flower is sweet
 The fair cheeks that blushed like the rose
 Beneath the bright glances of spring
 A palpable pallor disclose
 That warns our " belles " to take wing

Delicious flirtations beneath
 The spell of the star-studded sky,
 A spin o'er some far stretching heath,
 These *both* will be theirs by-and-by.

The fisherman's favourite flies
The salmon will snare as of old,
And grouse will fall never to rise
On moorlands all purple and gold,
Away from the sweltering town
Where thousands are gasping for air,
To the breeze-smitten sweep of the Down,
Or the red deer's dim fern-sheltered lair.
All day towards the station they stream,
Packed "growlers," and hansoms galore,
The season will soon be a dream,
A dream of the past, nothing more.

LIFE AND DEATH.

No bonnier couple would you see
Through merrie England's broad expanse
A manly, stalwart fellow he,
With keen grey eyes and eagle glance ;
Whilst she, his wife, was one of those
Who make of marriage one long May,
And shed the fragrance of the rose
Across Life's dusty, weary way.

It was, alas ! their fate to dwell
Amid a mighty city's roar,
Although they loved the dreamy dell,
And longed to see a skylark soar ;

But though girt round with hideous towers,
 With brick and mortar far and near,
 Their hearts were fresh as early flowers
 Which through the pavement's chinks appear.

He to a ledger chained, until
 Pale Even quenched Day's sultry flame;
She with her birds and flowers, but still
 The same serene contented dame,
 And thus, amid the ceaseless din,
 There was no cosier, cooler nest;
 Bright hues, and peace, and shade within—
 Without, the Demon of Unrest.

But what a drama, vast and strange,
 They saw rehearsed before their eyes:
 An ever heaving sea of change
 Rolled sullenly beneath the skies!
 Athwart Life's stage, Night's ebon pall
 Would drop, and lo! the play was o'er!
 Till dawn would draw it back, when all
 The players strutted as before!

Death in his draperies dark and dread,
 And funeral feathers, whispered "woe!"
 Amid the living went the dead,
 In dismal hearses to and fro.
 Familiar faces they had known
 Were missed at church, or in the mart;
 Too surely had the spoiler thrown
 Once more his keen Lethean dart!

Day's golden light had taken wing,
And one fair night, beneath the moon,
They marvelled much that we should cling
Unto a world we leave so soon.
Our baby blossoms ere they bloom
Are blasted by an icy breath ;
Friends flit to their mysterious doom,
And nothing seems assured, but Death !

* * * * *

Some months had flown, and in the time
Of roses, by a brambled stream
They sat, and listened to the chime
Of village bells, as in a dream.
A mimic waterfall hard by
Dashed with its spray her forehead fair,
Wings flashed amid the greenery,
And life and light were everywhere.
" Here, Death," she murmured with a sigh,
" No place or part can fairly claim ;
Strange, strange, to think that we must die,
And this fair nook be still the same !
But oh, my Love, to sink to sleep,
This streamlet singing us to rest,
To wake in bowers green and deep,
That lie beyond the blushing West."

ONLY A DREAM !

I DREAMT that I sang you a song
In the hush of a midsummer night,

When the stars—a bewildering throng—
 Were shining transcendently bright.
 Your tresses, all gleaming like gold,
 Fell down to your fairylike feet,
 And Dian's soft rays, as of old,
 Enhanced your rare loveliness, sweet !

I dreamt that I told you a tale,
 A tale of the dim long ago,
 Deep down in a violet vale,
 Where zephyrs were whispering low.
 Wild roses leant over our nest,
 And tears gathered fast in your eyes,
 As I told a weird tale of the West,
 Beneath the blue midsummer skies.

Anon, I awoke to despair !
 The morn was so cheerless and grey :
 Alas ! for my visions so fair,
 Struck dead by the dagger of Day !
 Where lovely immortelles unfold
 Their blooms gentle spirits among,
There only the tale can be told,
There only the song can be sung !

ON THE MELTING OF THE SNOW !

It clasped the cold earth but an hour ago,
 With its virginal zone
 Of glittering whiteness—that beautiful snow,
 Sweet Purity's own !

But *now* from Earth's shoulders has fallen away
That mantle so fair,
Beneath the bold glance of the amorous Day,
As he looks from his lair !
Scarce a shred of the mantle is left to her now,
Each moment I ween,
As I look o'er the land, I can trace some fresh glow
Of original green !
Thus lost by the lovely but frail one too soon,
Her maidenly dower
Of virtue, which erst in her girlhood's bright noon,
She held as a power,
Fades silently, secretly, out of her breast
Neath the snares men have set,
Till she stands up among us as black as the rest,
Though she cannot—forget !

A SONG FOR THE SEASON.

WE float down the river where dusky reeds shiver,
In a shallop of fretted gold,
By desolate bowers and ivy-wreathed towers
That stood in the days of old—
By glens deep and lonely, where frolic fays only
Disport 'neath the moon, float we ;
With music and laughter, and hallowed hush after—
On, on to the sounding sea !
Through sunlight and shadow, by moorland and meadow,
We steer for the setting sun,

Our bonny boat sweeping where lilies are sleeping,
 White-garmented every one !
 Our bark needs no guiding, as lazily gliding,
 We watch the fleet fishes flee,
 Till, when on the billow, yon sun finds his pillow,
 We cleave the blue sounding sea !

THE PHANTOM FISHER.

I.

ACROSS the lonely autumn wold
 The many-coloured leaves are flying ;
 Yon beeches burn like ruddy gold,
 And drearily the winds are sighing :
 They moan above the chill, deserted river,
 And sadly through the fading alders shiver.

II.

Fair May stole on us long ago,
 Her hawthorn blooms around us blowing,
 That fell like flakes of fairy snow
 Upon the stream, so smoothly flowing,
 Where, through the long, bright day, the trout were
 playing,
 And all creation madly went-a-Maying.

III.

In spirit was I there, I ween !
 All day amid that burst of glory
 A phantom fisher flogged unseen
 A stream renowned in trouting story—

Drew ghostly trout along the golden shallows
From their dim haunts beneath imagined shallows.

IV.

But I was musing far away
Beside the sparkling sounding billow,
While visions wild of foam and spray
Were nightly floating o'er my pillow ;
A spectral angler through the silent hours,
In streams that freshen Dreamland's dusky bowers.

V.

Thus through the daylight's garish time
My soul was roaming by the river,
And o'er its depths, at midnight chime,
Still did a phantom fly-rod quiver.
When shall I in the *flesh* my Copham clever
Wield once again? Pale echo answers, " Never ! "

THE LAST CAST

I.

THE evening was serene and cool,
The landscape lovely as a dream ;
I stood beside a trouty pool
In Bovey's blithesome swirling stream.
The dreaded end had come at last,
When I should make my *final cast* !

T

II.

The windings of that winsome brook
 I'd followed through the summer day ;
 Each tempting turn—each fairy nook—
Now many weary leagues away,
 Are photographed upon my brain :
 I *wish*, and wander there again !

III.

The dreary moor towards the west,
 Steep fields upon the other side,
 Down stream the vision I love best—
 The Cleave in all its barren pride !
 And in the foreground wood and wold,
 Starred with rich pink, and blue and gold !

IV.

The grizzled Palmer's light descent
 Upon the brooklet's dimpled brim,
 Beneath the bushes deftly sent,
 Where lurk the shadows deep and dim :
 The sudden splash—the bending rod—
 The crimson stain upon the sod !

V.

The wealth of bloom beneath my feet
 The rapture of wild woodland song ;
 The streamlet's tinkle, low and sweet,
 As daintily it slid along !
 The trusty creel's increasing weight—
 The sun going down in regal state.

VI.

And there, beside the pool, at last,
The breath of evening in the gale,
I sadly make my *last* light cast
In that romantic Devon dale !
•A fruitless one ! With moistened eye
I bid the Bovey brook good-bye !

IMAGININGS !

My goddess steals to earth on silver wings,
And gaily beckons to my saddened soul ;
Away, away, beyond material things
We soar—*my* goddess knows no mortal goal !
My soul is drawn into her faery car,
She shakes her slender reins,
Her shadowy steeds shoot swiftly as a star
To fairyland's domains.

The moon shines clear on mead, and mere
Where swans as white as snow,
O'er spaces bright of liquid light
Sail slowly to and fro.
Blythe elves I see, who mad with glee,
Come trooping down the glen,
With gnomes and sprites, who dance the nights
Away, unseen of men !

Those strange swans swim unto the brim,
 Weird ghostly birds are they ;
 Each downy back the elfish pack
 Bestride, and so away.
 Those ships so strange beyond the range
 Of vision pass away !

Around me washed in silver rays
 That flood the faery realm with glory,
 Grey castles peep from woodland ways,
 And each has its mysterious story !
 Dread dragons through the summer night are
 flying,
 And elfin songs away are slowly dying
 Far in the forest where the winds are sighing.

But melts enchantment's realm away
 With haunted castles, fairy laughter ;
 Those silent steeds her voice obey,
 And clouds of air sprites follow after
 That magic car, as onwards we are driven
 Through the blue distance of an unknown heaven.

We light upon a bright parterre,
 Where flowers red, and blue, and yellow
 Are set with art exceeding rare,
 The while the sunlight soft and mellow
 Floods the trim lawn with one rich burst of
 splendour,
 And kisses girlish figures lithe and slender !

Arrayed in simple gauzy dress,
With bright blooms sheathed amid their tresses,
They are a glimpse of loveliness,
Such as the Poet Dreamer guesses
May somewhere make sweet country homes elysian,
But never bursts upon *his mortal* vision.

Their dark eyes soften, as they move
White robed, 'mid blue and scarlet flowers ;
Their laughter light—their theme is love—
They rest anon in leafy bowers,
Where they are lulled by silver fountains playing
And summer roses o'er their heads are straying !

But these fade too in a magic mist,
Fountains, and fair ones, brilliant bloom
Hid by an envious veil of gloom—
She could recall them did she list.

She shakes the reins, and away we fly
Over a moorland wild and bare,
The curlew pipes in the cold still air,
A red sun sinking—a stormy sky.

Ghostly processions, weird and dim
Over the drear wastes seem to come,
Hearses and mutes—then a muffled drum,
And a dirge like a solemn funeral hymn.

Again, the moor like a dream has fled !
We seem to be skimming purple seas,
'Mid spectral sails, with a fresh salt breeze
Whistling cheerily overhead.

* * * *

278 *SKETCHES IN PROSE AND VERSE.*

The wide sea swims into the things that were,
We pause in our far flight,
My goddess mounts the deep blue dome of air,
Her steeds are lost to sight !
And I am left alone to meet again
The searching glance of day,
Left in a mingled mood of joy and pain
My visions passed away.

But she will come again, I well do know,
Fresh pleasures has she planned,
To open wide for me, who love them so,
The gates of Wonderland !

LINES

ON THE UNVEILING OF THE FIELDING MEMORIAL AT
TAUNTON BY THE HON. J. RUSSELL LOWELL.

THOUGH sundered by long leagues of stormy spray,
Yet from a common root-stock do we rise.
Our guest to-day is welcome as the May
To our inconstant Somersetshire skies !

To bare that brow whose bays shall ne'er grow sere,
Whilst Time's swift chariot shall onward roll,
A kinsman comes, whom Englishmen revere
For all the noble yearnings of his soul.

From this fair bust, at golden autumn-tide,
Whilst deep blue skies bend over us above,
The veil he draws, which may no longer hide
The features that we reverence and love !

And as we look, the light of other days
Will seem to hang about the cold dull stone,
Imagination's torch anew shall blaze,
And make him more than ever all our own !

Old Parson Adams is an evergreen,
Fast rooted in the garden of our hearts.
"Tom Jones" o'erflows with satire bright and keen ;
"Amelia" shows the man of many parts.

Well worthy Fielding of an honoured place
In our Walhalla of illustrious dead !
Right worthy Lowell of a kindred race,
To raise the curtain from the sculptured head !

And countless bosoms that enshrine him yet,
In years to come with honest pride will swell,
To think that *here* his monument is set
Amid the scenes he knew and loved so well !

"The Father of the Novel !" His renown
Will never die till Time his race has run !
From age to age we hand his glory down—
Immortal Fielding ! England's gifted son !

LOVE'S HAUNTS.

HERE we reclined 'neath a giant hoary,
 Screened from the search of the shafts that sear ;
 One of us telling the old, old story,
 Sounding so new in a maiden's ear.
 There, where a twining and twisted bramble
 Hangs o'er the shadowy winding way,
 Rested we once, in a lengthened ramble,
 When the earth rang to the songs of May.

Here, where the rivulet rushes madly,
 Bosomed in boughs, o'er its golden bed,
 Into a sweet face we looked full sadly,
 For those were parting words we said.
 There, where the path glimmers dark and lonely
 Under the pines that exclude the day,
 Fell your soft "Yes," whilst the zephyrs only
 Sighed through the tree-tops far away.

A BOATING SONG.

A FAERY skiff in a stream was lying—
 A skiff with a silken sail ;
 In a forest of fire the day was dying,
 And daintily stirred the gale ;
 When a maiden fair and a gallant gay
 Sprang into it lightly, and sailed away—
 Away through the purple gloaming.

No moon looked down from the vaulted heaven,

They sailed by the light of stars—

By the smile serene of the sisters seven

And the ruddier glow of Mars.

But the storm-king rose in his grandeur grim,

And the stars swam into the distance dim,

As they tossed on the troubled water.

The tempest ceased, and the broad, deep river

Flowed on with unruffled breast ;

Again in high heaven the sisters quiver,

And the wild winds sink to rest.

There is calm below, there is peace above,

And the eyes of the maiden are full of love

As she clings to her happy lover.

They hear the boom of the mighty ocean ;

Their blythe bark breasts its swell,

And westward glides with a gentle motion,

But *whither?* I cannot tell.

We know love's stream is not smooth for aye ;

But the sweet stars shine as they sail away

O'er the ocean of life together.

MY STUDY FIRE.

How cold and cheerless seems the grate !

It greets me with a hard blank stare,

It chills me, as in polished state

It reigns in gloom funereal there.

The massive poker's steely hue,

The very brightness of the tongs,

Bring down a swarm of devils blue,
 And set me brooding o'er my wrongs :—
 How Bobby, in his airy way,
 Sat down upon my Sunday hat ;
 How my poor phiz but yesterday
 Was scratched by that infernal cat !
 How Mr. Screw has raised my rent,
 How harrowing the price of coals,
 How Mrs. Starcher home has sent
 My shirt (a dress one) full of holes !
 What paltry dividends they pay
 On that " Run-in-and-Smash-'em " line ;
 How quickly Bobby grows away
 From suits that cost me two pounds nine
 How stupidly that silly cook
 Spoilt that expensive hare last night ;
 How the pert hussy will not brook
 A word from Bell, however slight !
 How Bell herself is growing short
 In temper, as the seasons wane ;
 How full of gout that pipe of port
 I bought last year in Logwood Lane !
 What piles of gold it takes to dress
 A woman—*when she is your wife* ;
 How spoony couples little guess
 The miseries of married life !

* * * * *

But lo ! a wee magician's wand—
 A lucifer—attracts my eye ;

I'll bow no more to sorrow's bond,
And to the "blues" I'll bid good-bye !
I smartly summon Mary Ann,
The grate is charged, the match applied,
A spurt, a crackle—that's my plan
To banish thoughts of suicide !
Anon there is a cheerful blaze ;
I revel in the ruddy glow ;
That wand's strange witchery shall raise
Pale phantoms of the long ago !
With growing pleasure do I peer
Between the bars, whilst visions sweet,
So tender as to lure a tear,
Adown the stream of memory fleet.
I look through winding fiery lanes—
Half-molten crags above them bend ;
Here glimmer incandescent plains,
There mimic Etnas upwards tend.
Lost in a reverie dim and deep,
I long sit musing, head on hand,
Whilst through the mists of dead years creep
Fair pictures from pale Lethe's land :
Sweet girlish faces—dreamy eyes,—
A ripple of resistless hair,
The brilliancy of southern skies,—
A wealth of bloom, an empty chair.
Anon I give a sudden start,
The firelight flashes on the wall ;
Its warmth strikes deep into my heart,
And devils blue have vanished all !

Things, after all, are not so bad :
 Bell loves *me* better than my cash,
 Poor Bobby is a decent lad,
 And cook, at least, can make a *hash* !
 Those dividends may rise by-and-by ;
 My shirt had long ago some holes ;
 And after all their witchery—why,
 I'll think not of the price of coals !
 Thus, in a happy hour for me,
 That young Magician—Ann the maid—
 Has routed vague despondency,
 Despising supernatural aid !
 She struck her rod—the lucifer—
 Upon the bars, and through my room
 Dim dreams and fairy fancies fleet,
 And gladness reigns instead of gloom !

AT CHAGFORD (DEVON).

'Tis evening, from my quaint old room
 I'm gazing through the mullioned pane,
 And see the sycamore's fair bloom,
 Yet deepened by the rhythmic rain.
 Beyond the churchyard is a sweep
 Of rounded hills that cut the sky ;
 Beneath them lie the gorges deep,
 Where Teign is dashing blythely by.
 Dun-coloured clouds—to-day's a blank,
 Nor from its case was drawn the rod ;
 I could not face the prospect dank,
 The steady rain, the dripping sod.

So all the *lines* I've dropped to-day
Have been lodged safely in the post ;
No flies I've *whisked* where troutlets play,
But tried the *whisky* of my host.

But as I pored o'er pleasant lore,
Or read the Laureate's graceful song,
In thought I grasped the rod once more
Where Bovey gaily swirls along.
Bright flowers flashed upon my sight ;
Again I sheltered 'neath the pines,
For read as closely as I might
The river ran between the lines.

Ah, me ! The days that I have had,
With trusty Perrott for my guide—
Though grey his locks, he's still a *lad*
At heart, and fishes far and wide !
The lunch beneath the soft blue dome,
When drams to dashing Dart I'd drain,
And then the pleasant saunter home,
Encumbered with the speckled slain.

My rambles o'er the dreary wild .
Will haunt me long, as in a dream,
And phantom trout will be beguiled
By fancied flies in mythic stream ;
Again in slumber shall I hear
The curlew piping overhead ;
Again live o'er—when none are near—
The happy hours that now are dead.

But stay ! two days are left me yet,
 And Perrott's eager for the fray ;
 Come piercing winds, or " heavy wet,"
 I'll o'er the moorlands and away.
 Old Dartmoor *ne'er again* may break
 Upon those waking eyes of mine ;
One thumping basket yet I'll make,
 As in the days of " Auld Lang Syne."

TO MY INFANT GODDAUGHTER.

I PICTURE thee, the very pink of pets !
 Thy mother's miniature ; her deep blue eyes
 Shine on in thine, which many a bright tear wets,
 Soft April showers from clear azure skies !
 Dear dimpled Dorothy, I long to leave
 One little legacy upon thy brow
 And chubby cheeks. Ah ! may the hard Fates weave
 For thee the destiny that I do now :
 That thou shalt shoot into the slender flower
 Of graceful girlhood ; win a wealth of love,
 Till sister angels, in life's sunset hour,
 Transplant thee gently to the fields above.

CHRISTMAS BELLS !

CLASH, Christmas Bells ! from many an ivied tower—
 'Tis Angel-music streaming far and near ;
 Again we hail the hallowed, gracious hour
 When love and pity dry the scalding tear !

Clash, Christmas Bells ! and tell the story olden,
How the sweet Babe upon His Mother's breast,
Within a manger rude, was closely folden,
A woman hushed the King of kings to rest !

Clash, Christmas Bells ! the simple tale revealing
Of Bethlehem meadows washed in moonlight cold,
When clouds of Angels, joyful pæans pealing,
Burst on the vision of those men of old.

Clash, Christmas Bells ! across the sleeping waters,
O'er dreaming dells, above the lonely lea,
Proclaiming peace to all Earth's sons and daughters,
Good will and peace to all eternally !

Clash, Christmas Bells ! and in the pensive maiden
Wake tender memories of her absent love ;
Rouse the dull ear, console the heavy-laden,
And to the weary tell of rest above !

Clash, Christmas Bells ! your joyful message winging
" O'er Earth's green fields," along the rugged shore
(Let us in fancy hear the angels singing)—
Clash forth, ye Bells, till Christmas comes no more !

PRINCE LEOPOLD, DUKE OF ALBANY.

(IN MEMORIAM.)

THE young wife looked for a merry meeting—
He would be flying across the foam—
The sweet kiss of welcome—the loving greeting
Yet once again in their English home !

Filling the chambers with fairest flowers,
 Such as her darling loved to see,
 Joyfully counting the laggard hours,
 Cooing to baby on her knee!

Pressing at night, in content, her pillow,
 Still to be near him in happy dreams,
 Spirit with spirit beyond the billow,
 Lulled by the music of falling streams!
 Then the spring dawn, and the pleasant waking,
 Hope lightly chasing her formless fears—
 Ah! the dull pain! and the heart nigh breaking,
 Saved by a sudden storm of tears!

Solemnly, sadly, with trembling fingers,
 Draw we the veil round the house of death;
 Surely *His* angel about her lingers,
 Flew to her side with the fleeting breath.
 Spare we a prayer for the mother weeping
 In the grey castle—far apart—
 Every subject *her* sorrow keeping,
 Deeply shrined in his inmost heart!

He trod the path of his noble sire,
 Gifted and gentle, kind and brave,
 Slender the sheath—but a soul of fire—
 England bends sadly above his grave.
 With orange blossoms are white hands weaving,
 Mournfully, mutely, the cypress spray—
 Yet may His glory shame this grieving—
 Dear eyes dazzled with perfect day!

IN THE GLEN !

THROUGH a garden of greenery glanced the stream,
In the glow of the bright May weather,
As, deep in the glen, in a happy dream,
They sat, he and she together !
The cushat was cooing on beechen spray ;
The mavis, through shine and shower,
A madrigal sang as the lovers lay
Below in their leafy bower.

Soft airs dallied over their dim retreat,
The woodbine wound fair above ;
His eyes were glad, and her smile was sweet,
As the light winds lisped of love !
Young violets gleamed 'mid the golden moss,
And the hyacinth's purple bell
The rhythmical rillet leant across,
In the depths of that dreamy dell !

They still sat on, whilst the day declined,
And the west took a glow of glory ;
Round her fairy waist was his strong arm twined,
As he murmured the old, old story !
The stars looked down from the solemn skies,
As they rose from their dainty bower,
Wandering homeward with love-lit eyes,
In the hush of the twilight hour !

THE TELEGRAPH BOY.

(A REMINISCENCE.)

A MORN in May—a merry morn—
 Larks singing in the blue—
 A waft of fragrance from the thorn
 Still drenched with early dew ;
 Laburnums prodigal of gold,
 And lovely lilacs, sway
 Wind shaken—from the beeches old
 A summer roundelay !

That gravel walk—I see it yet
 With fancy's inner eye,
 Its shaven margins deftly set
 With blooms of varied dye.
 Rich orange marigolds aflame,
 Pure pansies all arow,
 And peonies that put to shame
 The poppies' scarlet glow.

Through trellised lattice opened wide
 Steals in the roving gale,
 With sweets from all the country side
 And whispers of the dale !
 Whilst borne upon its viewless stream,
 Far floating fairy song
 Doth lull me in a waking dream,
 That holds me captive long.

Soft murmurs from the drowsy doves
Who in some dark retreat
Are busy with their little loves
Above the rustic seat.
Beyond—the hills so dimly fair
That crown the distant main,
And ringing through the balmy air
The cuckoo's blythe refrain.

I start—a glory floods the room—
Athwart the sill I lean
Into a bath of light and bloom,
And sun myself in sheen !
When lo ! upon the walk a tread !
Why do I hold my breath ?
What voice sepulchral to me said,
“ *The Messenger of Death* ” ?

Beneath the drooping yellow sprays
Right merrily strode he,
And, clasped by morning's golden rays,
Come swiftly up to me !
He brushed the blooms, the dewdrops flew
In showers dazzling bright ;
But *he* had come, my spirit knew,
To quench my day in night !

THE TEMPTATION !

My pulse beats strongly—courses through each vein,
The blood-red stream which feeds this lower life,

Thoughts, swift and strange, are bounding through my
brain,

And fancy with a thousand whims is rife.

Why am I here? What is the change called *Death*?

Where are *they* gone whose hands I locked in mine?

When on *this* cheek *I* feel his icy breath,

And *I* must drain his dreaded deadly wine;

What then will follow? Shall I wing my flight

With clouds of angels far beyond the sun?

Or be o'ertaken by a blacker night,

And learn that Death but means that all is done?

The deep dark secret gnaws my restless soul,

I count as nothing Life's exultant prime,

One burning wish is mine to know the goal,

• And speed beyond the utmost bourne of Time!

A tiny phial at my elbow lies,

And if I raise it to my lips! Behold!

The veil is torn from these weak straining eyes,

The riddle read—the solemn secret told!—

What holds me back from this too easy deed,

Which merely needs a movement of the hand,

To free the soul and let it swiftly speed

On to the twilight of the Silent Land?

TWO BRIGHTON CELEBRITIES.

(IN MEMORIAM.)

¹ No more arrayed in homely guise,

We see him on his carpet wee,

¹ The Blind Man's dog.

With longing wistful weary eyes
For ever turned towards the sea !
No more he catches in his can
The pence of passers on the " Steyne,"
And with the lonely sightless man,
Another faithful friend is seen !

Though racked maybe with direst pain,
He did his duty to the last,
Was drenched full oft with driving rain,
And beaten by the biting blast—
Peace to his soul—his mission done,
He rests in cool green glades above,—
For God will surely smile on one
Who was so full of faith and love !

Another hero, too, I miss,
Whose bark announced the soles and plaice,
No more his forehead may I kiss,
Nor look into his honest face.
He, too, now takes his well-earned rest
Upon a fairer, brighter shore,
But sorrow sinks into my breast
That Brighton knows the twain no more !

A COUNTRY WALK IN JANUARY.

DEJECTED and alone I move
Across the uplands, wild and grey ;
For light and life have passed away
From those deep solitudes I love.

² The Fisherman's dog " Charley."

The light that laved the purple hills
 Through happier days, with Autumn fled
 And all the fairy blooms are dead
 That fluttered o'er the flashing rills.

The slender stitchwort's stars of snow
 No more, enwreathed with green, appear ;
 The showy mullein's stately spear
 Was rudely shattered months ago !

The meadow-sweet no longer flings
 Its fragrance to the winds, I ween ;
 No more the vetch of purple sheen
 Mounts upwards on its azure wings.

Nor 'mid the golden gorse doth peep
 The dainty dropwort, as of yore ;
 A thousand cannon's mighty roar
 Could not disturb the speedwell's sleep.

From breezy down and hollow dim
 Has gone the glory ; and we bow
 In dreary resignation now
 To sullen Winter, gaunt and grim.

TO A MOTHER.

(ON A WELCOME ARRIVAL.)

MAY Life's rough path for him be paved with light,
 And hedged with roses upon either side ;
 May no dark shadows of the coming night
 Dim the rare radiance of his morning-tide !

May Heaven bless him through the coming years,
His days be cloudless, and his slumber sweet,
His laughing eyes be seldom wet with tears,
And loving angels guide his little feet.
May he, anon, his sister shield from harm,
Both on their parents lavish boundless love,
Each be encircled by their Saviour's arm,
Till in His bosom they shall rest above !

THE FATAL SHAFT !

THE Lady Hilda upon a day,
When roses blushed far and wide,
Had sought her bower to dream away
The hours till eventide.
Bright blooms were fluttering overhead,
'Mid the cool green leaves ; and o'er
The broidery frame her fingers sped,
Where they never should wander more !
In a dainty framework of roses rare
Was a daintier picture set—
An angel face—loosened red gold hair—
And blue eyes but newly wet.
Her white silk robe rustled stealthily,
In her eyes a strange, soft gleam ;
Her bosom heaved like the summer sea,
Her smile was sweet as a dream.

"He will not come," Lady Hilda sighed
 "Till yon flaming orb burns low.
 Anon down the quiet forest side,
 To meet my true knight I go!"

* * * * *

The shadows silently, softly fell
 Athwart the deep grassy glades,—
 A woodland bird sang so wild and well,
 Close hidden in sylvan shades.

The Lady rose at the June day's close,
 And forth from the bower passed;
 In her bosom she sheathed a crimson rose,
 Nor recked she had plucked her last!

Adown the vistas she slowly went,
 Content in the cool, calm air;
 But fortune frowned on her fond intent;
 Sir Ronald she met not there.

She paused a space, in a brake—apart—
 When there whistled a cloth-shaft true,
 That sank full deep in the gentlest heart
 That ever a lover knew!

Sir Ronald sprang from his screen hard by,
 To seize on his stricken prey;
 But a sad sight smote his expectant eye,
 Where his lady a-dying lay.

He thought that a lusty buck was slain :
His arrow drank nobler blood !
One cry of exceeding bitter pain,
And his heart broke, where he stood !

* * * * *

The good monks bore them on solemn bier,
Or ever arose the sun ;
And swiftly up to the heavenly sphere,
Their two souls flew like one !

A JUNE SONG.

THE dells are ablaze with flowers
As in the rich Junes of old ;
The woodlands, these glowing hours,
Are plunged in a bath of gold.
Doves brood in the forests hoary
And dream where the shade is deep ;
Whilst fairies, by moonlight's glory,
Hold revel when mortals sleep.

At noon, when the landscape quivers
With fiery fervent heat,
When the cattle stand deep in rivers,
And the shadow of leaves is sweet ;
Afar, 'mid the cool green rushes,
You'll light on a cosy nest,
Where the rill through the grasses gushes
And foams in a bright unrest.

298 *SKETCHES IN PROSE AND VERSE.*

The breeze that has swept the ocean,
And scattered the flaky foam,
Steals by with a fitful motion,
And kisses our leafy home.
Wild roses above us swaying
In delicate pink array,
And o'er our faces playing
A shower of silver spray.

But out of that sea of fire
Earth riseth at eventide ;
She robeth in grey attire,
And layeth her gauds aside.
Anon, in the blue above us,
Shall burn the red planet Mars,
As slowly, with those that love us,
We wander beneath the stars !

THE FIRST CROCUSES AND SNOWDROPS.

I.

THEY gladden my eyes on this dun-coloured day !
I weave fairy visions of joys yet unborn,
When the lanes shall be white with the blooms of
sweet May,
And wild woodland music awake with the morn !
These, Amabel's snowy arms shaming ;
Those, flambeaux-like, brilliantly flaming.
Into earth's chilly lap the too prodigal spring
Her gold and her silver doth lavishly fling.

II.

With the rich blooms of summer they may not compare—

She who makes the green meads and the shadowy vales

One gorgeous garden—unspeakably fair—

Swept softly by scented mellifluous gales ;

But to *me* they are dearer—far dearer—

As proving spring nearer and nearer.

She woos us once more, as *she* wooed us of old,

With a glittering armful of silver and gold !

THE WHITE LIE !

(A BALLAD.)

IT was the felon doomed to die

For stealing one stray sheep ;

His sickly child's faint hungry cry

Into his heart cut deep !

They lived beside a moor, I trow.

Ah, me ! the winds were loud !

The world forgot them all as though

Each one was in a shroud !

Bread was to them an empty dream !

Bread, with three mouths to feed !

And 'neath the moonlight's mocking gleam

Want spurred him to the deed !

The sheep was missed, the country side
Was up—each lusty clown,
With execrations, far and wide,
Did seek to hunt him down !

They tracked him through the daylight's glare,
Their torches scared the night !
Yet never found the wretch's lair—
God hid him from their sight !

Across a solitary wild
Long leagues away fled he,
With visions of his dying child
To bear him company.

At length he reached a sullen mere
O'er which crags darkly frowned,
And in a gloomy cavern here
The *felon* harbour found.

She knew it. He had named the place
Ere he had hither fled ;
So, when the murky clouds did race
At midnight overhead,

She donned some rags against the cold
Her babe was at her breast,
And swiftly o'er the lonely wild
Towards the mere she pressed.

But as she neared the cavern, lo
Shouts rent the stormy sky,
And o'er the wild the furious foe
Came on with hue and cry.

They knew her not. "Thou pale-faced jade,
Hast seen the villain? Say!"

She answered, "Towards yon forest's shade
But now he sped away!"

Saved! For they passed—*she* found her love.
The sea they crossed that night.
Such lies waft human souls above
On wings all dazzling bright!

A FLOWER SERVICE!

THE little ones came trooping up in numbers,
Their dainty baskets piled
With flowers which have haunted long the slumbers
Of many a sickly child.

The little ones, their cheeks all flushed and glowing
With health's divinest glow,
Their flaxen tresses o'er their shoulders flowing,
They are smiling as they go.

The peaches 'mid the cool green mosses peeping
No brighter bloom can wear
Than the faces of the fairies who are sweeping
So gaily onwards there.

The flowers which the summer wind caresses,
With their varied, dainty dyes,
Can vie not with the glory of their tresses
Or the brightness of their eyes!

At the altar steps they render up their treasure,
 Then glide they back again ;
 God's children who have given joy and pleasure
 To others racked with pain !

DARTMOOR.

WHEN, in her train, the gentle Spring
 Brings bloom, and song, and lengthened light,
 Once more I smooth my ruffled wing,
 And plume it for my vernal flight.
 I gladly drop the pointless pen,
 And rest the clouded, weary brain.
 Away ! away ! from haunts of men,
 To distant Dartmoor once again.

The turf is crisp beneath my feet,
 Beside the bounding stream I stand,
 While fleecy cloudlets calmly fleet
 Above that lonely, dreary land !
 My cheek once more is wet with spray,
 Where Teign makes music in the wild ;
 Though girt with silence and decay,
 I feel the freshness of the child.

Where now I lure on moorlands rude,
 Bright trout 'mid flash of silver foam,
 In Time's dim night a forest stood,
 The giant conifer's dark home—

Where now the purple heather smiles,
And gorse has broken into gold,
Strange shapes roamed dusky sylvan aisles,
In those mysterious days of old.

* * * *

I stand alone—the curlew's wail
Is floating weirdly just above ;
And here the linnet tells his tale—
His tender, tiny tale of love.
The Tors in gloomy grandeur rise,
Grim—gaunt—gigantic—far away,
Where, 'neath the ever-changing skies,
I pass my vernal holiday.

THE BEAUTY.

(SUGGESTED BY MR. RICHARD JEFFERIES' ARTICLES IN
"SOCIETY.")

UPON a lawn that sloped towards the west
She stood beneath a roof of lisping leaves,
One crimson rosebud nestling at her breast,
And in a sunny reverie she weaves
A chain of fairy fancies ; linking so
The present hour to the unborn years—
A chain of light, without a shade of woe,
Or any presage of potential tears.
She is so fair, that, as in awe you gaze,
Her radiant beauty to your eyes has grown,
Unseen the blooms that all around her blaze,
For she has made their loveliness her own !

So lovely is she that she seems to lure
 All light and bloom into her form and face ;
 Beside its tints the pansy seems less pure,
 And the pale lily shorn of half its grace.
 See how the morning sleeps upon her brow,
 And how its beams are netted in her hair !
 Those wondrous eyes, that look beyond the " Now "
 To where the Future glimmers strangely fair ;
 Dwell on the dazzling whiteness of her arm,
 So delicately rounded, yet so strong ;
 Those full red lips, whose pretty pout would charm
 A new Saint Anthony—whose voice is song.
 Watch her pink fingers, as they lightly toy
 With slender sprays of gold and scarlet bloom ;
 Her quiet pose, so graceful yet so coy,
 Within the grateful, softly-chequered gloom.
 All-reverently watch her, for you see
 A *perfect picture* that will hardly die
 Within your brain—this maiden, fancy free,
 Reflects the glories of a day gone by !
 Three hundred years, amid this wealth of green,
 These blushing roses, and those pleasant fields,
 Her stainless ancestors have dwelt serene,
 And drunk the vintage lavish Nature yields.
 Three hundred times the cheery swallow came
 Beneath the eaves to rear her bonny brood ;
 Three hundred springs appeared the first faint flame
 Of celandines in yonder little wood ;
 Gay sunburnt children picked the primrose there
 In the dim past, and pulled the hawthorn's snows,

By day exulting in the sweet, pure air,
 And lulled at night by owlets to repose ;
 Three hundred years the sportive zephyrs swayed
 The yellow tresses of the ripened wheat,
 And all that time the lusty trout have played
 In yonder brooklet tinkling at your feet ;
 As Time wore on the daughters fairer grew,
 Their locks still lovelier, whilst their laughing eyes
 Caught a still deeper, more entrancing blue
 From the soft witchery of summer skies ;
 And here, the last, the loveliest of her line,
 Who owns the sorcery of seventeen,
 Reaps the rich harvest, glorious, divine,
 Of that sweet subtlety of sound and sheen !
 But seventeen ! Yet in that girlish frame
 Is locked the magic of three hundred years !
 Their moonlit nights, their summer's ardent flame,
 And all the freshness of their April tears !

MARRIAGE.

In the morn of creation, when Heaven's own glory
 Was caught by a region unspeakably fair,
 Whose bowers of bliss are still hallowed in story,
 As shading in Eden the earliest pair,
 We see the first union of valour and beauty,
 That mystical tie which was fashioned above ;
 The woman to move to the music of duty,
 And yield up to *one* the rare wealth of her love,

306 *SKETCHES IN PROSE AND VERSE.*

The man to protect her, and shield her from danger,
Her guide and her guardian angel below,
To keep her unscathed from the arm of the stranger,
And strengthen her soul in the season of woe ;
To fold her to him, when adversity's thunder
Rolls loudly athwart life's diversified way.
God rivets the links ; let not man put asunder
The twain who are fettered so firmly for aye !

Mysterious rite ! In its sanctity awful,
And blessed by high Heaven when love storms the heart,
Unearthly yet human—what God hath made lawful,
No malice of men can assail or dispart.
Ah ! treat it not lightly, thou soft blushing maiden,
And tremble, O man, with her hand in thy own !
Ye still may be one in that glorious “Aidenn,”
And stand side by side at the foot of His throne.

Then think of it when in the hushed hallowed hour,
Glides up to His altar the beautiful bride,
No more to return to her pure earthly bower,
But ever to smile upon one at her side !
Ay, muse on it well, as that fairy procession
Moves on to the altar in brilliant array,
God writes it in Heaven—that solemn confession,
For listening angels have borne it away !

THE MAIDEN AUNT TO HER NIECE.

AH, yes ! I am old and lonely,
And the fire has left my eye ;

I live in the dead past only,
In the light of the days gone by.
Sunset approaches—the shadows grow long,
Life's day is drawing to evensong.

Yet, when the world hushed is lying,
In bright dreams I am young again ;
And swiftly my feet are flying,
To the sounds of a joyous strain ;
With wild, floating tresses, I queen it there,
As in the dead days, when my face was fair.

When these thin, grey locks were glancing
In the sun—living waves of gold—
And these tired, dim eyes were dancing,
With mischief and mirth untold.
And there was one lover, but let that go—
The night draweth near—it is better so.

Well, I have no wish to linger,
For I have grown weary, love ;
And a shadowy solemn finger,
Seems ever to point above !
There true balm awaiteth the wounded breast,
After the fret and the fever—rest.

THE EMPRESS OF INDIA.

God save the Empress of India, bless her and widen her
 sway !
Crown her with glory, and guard her well whom we are
 proud to obey !

308 *SKETCHES IN PROSE AND VERSE.*

Let all her months be Mays,
Brighten her coming days,
Whilst the glad strain we raise,
God bless the Queen !

Pave all her paths with light—
Strengthen her sceptre's might—
Shield her by day and night,
God bless the Queen !

Save our Empress, and long may she reign.
God save the Empress of India ! make her triumphant
on shore !
Victory send to her "Hearts of Oak" when the waves
battle and roar !

II.

Let her flag stream o'er the stormy deep ! Waft her
renown on the breeze !
Borne to the ends of the wond'ring earth, over blue
tropical seas !

May Peace, like gentle dove,
Lapped in the light of love,
Brood, her bright throne above !
God bless the Queen !

Spare her yet many years,
Turn to smiles all her tears,
Calm all her doubts and fears,
God bless the Queen !

Our loved Queen ! long, long may she reign !
Far be the day of a nation's woe, but when Thou givest
her rest,
Set a *new* crown on her forehead fair, in the bright
"Isles of the Blest !"

A JULY IDYLL.

ONCE again are the roses fair,
 Bashful roses that burn and blush
All unseen in their leafy lair,
 Where the musical rillets gush.

Once again are the roses sweet,
 Clust'ring, twining, trailing they—
Shielding now our dim retreat
 From the fiery glance of day.

Once again does the swift strong sun
 Fiercely beat on the broad bare wold,
Whilst the landscape that erst was dun
 Is dipped deep in a bath of gold.
Once again to the cool green shade
 Far in the forest do we hie,
Lightly loitering down the glade
 With some lady in bright July !

Stilled alas ! are the waves of song,
 Lately borne to the ravished ear,
Pæans poured by the sylvan throng
 Through the solitudes far and near—
Yet does melody linger still—
 Girls laugh low where the stream slides by,
Women—pretty ones—work their will
 With us easily—in July !

Steal we down to the sad sea-shore,
 Rhythmical there is the ebb and flow,
Over us smoothly the sea gulls soar ;
Seawards and landwards the white sails go !

Through the long hours the waters roll
 Lazily over the golden sand,
 Luring the listener's listless soul
 Into the silence of Lethe's Land.

Now do we dream through the mid-day glare,
 Whilst the bees in some warm bright spot
 Drowsily humming here and there
 Woo the sweet clover and melilot !
 Roam we slowly, through woodland ways,
 Where the shadows are dark and deep,
 There forgetting the scorching days
 In the rapture of silken sleep.

O sweet to feel o'er my burnt cheek blown
 Delicate ripple of glossy curls !
 And sweeter far is the ring-dove's moan
 When it is blended with voice of girls !
 Ah ! vex us never, ye soulless *men*,
 Beneath this sapphire cloudless sky !
 Leave us to *ladies* just now, and then
 We are contented in bright July !

A YEAR AGO.

(FOR MUSIC.)

ALONE ! alone ! the twilight's solemn hour
 Is merging softly in the summer night,
 Alone ! alone ! within my leafy bower,
 With twining roses fading from my sight

And was it *here* we met the jocund morn,
With laughing eyes and faces all aglow?
Here that we heard the huntsman's bugle-horn
A year ago?

Alone! alone! whilst night is winding fast
Around my form her mantle dark and dread,
Alone! alone! with memories of the past,
That cloudlike rise above the gentle dead!
The silence sinks into my spirit now,
As the dark deepens, so my yearnings grow;
And was it *here* I kissed her sunny brow,
A year ago?

Alone! alone! I am *alone* no more,
At last, responsive to my voiceless prayer,
A spirit-shape from the serener shore
Is standing mute beside my oaken chair,
She only points with shining hand above,
She speaks of glory with her eyes—and lo!
Once more, *alone*, I sit where Life was Love,
A year ago!

THE DEVON MYSTERY.

DEEP in the bosom of the woodlands fair,
Lies the lone pond; above it night and day
The gaunt trees bend, and guard it grimly there,
While changing seasons slowly roll away:

312 *SKETCHES IN PROSE AND VERSE.*

They know the secret, but each guardian dread
Has locked securely in his moss-clad breast
The solemn story of the youthful dead,
When blooming girlhood found untimely rest
In those dark waters—haply saw her leap
Into the sullen blackly-flowing tide,
To drown her sorrows in a dreamless sleep,
When May was reigning in exultant pride?
They saw a human form—a woman's—stand
Upright within the fateful watery gloom,
While their sad branches waved on either hand,
Like hearse's plumes above her lonely tomb.
Was it mischance that sealed those laughing eyes
For evermore? Or was a dark deed done,
That cried aloud for vengeance to the skies,
And pierced the ears of the All-Seeing One?
We cannot tell. Those mute funereal trees
Tell no strange tale of woe or cruel wrong;
Nor may we know until the stormy seas
Resign the victims they have gulfed so long.

VANITAS!

VANITY! Vanity! Hearts waxing cold
Beauty unblushingly bartered for gold;
Pleasure's flushed votaries seeking to drown
Care in the shallow delights of the town;
Hearts lightly broken by ladies who smile
Sweetly, and shatter a life's dream the while.

Cheeks that wore roses in May's early prime,
Wrinkled and hollow by haymaking time !
Home duties, happiness, honour, and health,
Sacrificed all at the altar of wealth.
Youth with lips fevered, fast draining that bowl,
Fraught but with doom to both body and soul !
Perjury, avarice, luxury, pride,
All the *real gold* of humanity hide ;
Until, scorched to death by the wrath of the sun,
Down comes the curtain, the season is done !

(*Society.*)

“PARVA DOMUS—MAGNA QUIES.”

The inscription over Captain Percival's villa at Cannes, where
Prince Leopold died.

As through those portals our lost one went,
These grand words broke upon his daily sight.
Could they have whispered that his span was spent ?
Did they foreshadow the approaching night ?
We cannot tell—nor shall we ever know
Until we meet him on that twilight shore,
Beyond the deep, o'er which our dead ones go,
Whose billows' dreary dirge is “Nevermore !”
His race is run—a shining angel flew
To that fair home beneath soft sapphire skies,
Gave him that *rest* which *here* he never knew,
And gently drew the bandage from his eyes.

ETHEL : A MEMORY.

HER white arm rested on a bank of moss
That was all golden green ;
Beside her, wind-stirred hyacinths did toss
Their bells of purple sheen ;

A baby beck was flashing at her feet,
Above her head a bloom—
A deep pink bloom of rustic roses, meet
For that cool, fragrant gloom !

Through the green roof of lisping leaves above
A few faint sunbeams strayed,
That kissed the tangled tresses of my Love,
And o'er her features played.

Far down the silence of the forest aisles
There floated fairy song,
The rill was wreathed with countless dimpled smiles,
And gaily danced along.

Down a long vista on the other side,
As far as eye could see,
Tall foxgloves towered in their summer pride
And pomp of panoply !

Beyond—above—were pleasant sunny leas
That sloped towards the west,
Crowned on the ridge with dark ancestral trees
Where stately hems did rest.

Beyond—a village, which the uplands grey
Had taken, so it seemed,
For shelter to their bosom—there it lay,
And through the noontide dreamed !

Whilst all around our nest was tender light,
Soft slumbrous sounds, and sighs
Of love-lorn zephyrs dallying long to plight
Their troth 'neath azure skies.

Then, as my darling cooled her cheek all flushed
Against her snowy arm,
From her dim bower where the roses blushed
She threw a subtle charm

O'er those deep solitudes—each woodland flower
Had never looked so fair !
Each seemed to *know* in that delicious hour
That *she* was resting there !

Anon she murmured, as her glorious eyes
Sought mine, the boughs between,
“ A day for dreaming, love, till daylight dies,
A quiet sylvan scene ! ”

* * * * *

Gone is the garish glory of the time
When summer shone supreme,
Passed, as a pageant shadowy, yet sublime,
May vanish in a dream !

No longer silver showers softly fall,
 Decay demands her dower,
 Her gold and scarlet spoils, as with a pall,
 Shroud our rose-wreathed bower !

Wail the wild winds across the wintry wold ;
 That baby beck, ah me !
 No longer babbles blithely, as of old,
 But roareth to the sea !

* * * *

I sit within a quiet, darkened room,
 Where one I love lies low ;
 Alone and silent in the twilight gloom,
 I dream of long ago !

A faint voice falls upon my eager ear,
 I list with bated breath—
 “The dawn is breaking, Love—the day draws near !”
 Then came the hush of death !

* * * *

Now snowstorms darken skies of iron-gray,
 And angry tempests yell,
 Or sweet Spring softly decks each barren spray
 With bloom in yonder dell.

Now Summer fades, and Autumn in her stead,
 The greenwood girds with gold ;
 I heed them not—the light of life has fled
 With those bright days of old !

THE WITCHERY OF FAIR WOMEN.

AMID Life's thorny ways they move,
Embodiments of Light and Love.
One glance from those deep, dreamy eyes,
And silken slumber swiftly flies !
One pressure from that little hand,
And lo ! we walk in fairyland !
One glossy ringlet lightly blown
Across the cheek so near her own,
And through long years of joy or ill
Its thrilling touch will haunt us still !
A few low words let lightly fall
Like dew from roses—that is all—
And every pulse of being is stirred
As by the music of a bird.
That whisper cherished till we die,
Will “vibrate in the memory !”
One waft of her ambrosial breath
Would freshen e'en the cheek of Death,
And basking in those glorious eyes,
We wish no other Paradise !

PRIMROSE AND PARASITE !

OF that just praise which is his right,
For service rendered to the state,
We would not wish one jot to bate,
Nor ever hold his memory light !

With caustic tongue, and pungent pen,
 He battled for his country's weal,
 To all her deepest instincts leal,
 And quick to read the hearts of men !

Far seeing, subtle, ne'er dismayed,
 A strategist, who used his friends
 As stepping-stones towards his ends,
 And deftly on their follies played !

He caught the fancies of the hour,
 Became their mouthpiece far and nigh,
 And made them wings whereon to fly
 To dazzling pinnacles of power !

Such was the statesman all regret,
 And well may smile his stately ghost
 At stilted metres in "the Post,"
 And bunkum in the *Saint's Gazette* !

His floral fav'rite glittered bright,
 Of late, upon ten thousand breasts,
 But senseless silly praise suggests
 "The Primrose and the Parasite."

IN MEMORIAM.

ACROSS the valleys deep and dim
 The shadows crept that summer day,
 Whilst like a mighty pauseless hymn
 The ocean thundered far away ;

Anon, the sun would flood the view
With golden glory far and wide,
As, with fast-beating hearts, we two
Passed up the lonely mountain side ;
And still it swims before my eye—
That afternoon in bright July !

The bracing breeze that swept the down,
Upon our upturned faces beat,
And far below, the pleasant town
Lay sleeping in the noontide heat.
The turf with flow'rets white and red
Was thickly starred—a lovely band.
I picked them as we onward sped
To swell the posy in your hand,
And as you gently clasped each prize,
I read my thanks within your eyes !

We gained the summit, you and I,
The skylark carolled high above,
White cloudlets drifted through the sky,
And all was redolent of love !
Then turning down a winding lane,
We paused before a sheltered lea ;
Below us gleamed the waving grain,
Beyond—a vision of the sea !
And there we found a soft green nest
Till rosy grew the distant west !

Ah ! happy day ! Ah ! restful hour !
Ye cannot die within my brain !

The field—the sea—each woodland flower—
 I seem to see them all again !
 And though that spot so calmly fair
 No longer knows your fairy tread,
 In spirit we may wander there,
 Our steps by wayward fancy led !
 May pick in thought the weeds once more,
 And look upon that sunlit shore !

CALLED BY THE CUCKOO !

(FOR MUSIC.)

THE morn it broke right merrily that sunny first of May,
 The early dew lay still upon the flower,
 A cuckoo hailed the drowsy world from slender haw-
 thorn spray,
 His call awoke a lady in her bower.
 She was sleeping lightly, dreaming fairy dreams,
 Wandering in ghost-land, by eternal streams,
 Where, amid the rushes, golden iris gleams—
 When there floated on the gale
 From the depths of yonder dale
 The greeting that the cuckoo gives to May !
 Was that strange voice a phantom bird's, from Shadow
 Land ?—ah ! no !
 The lady woke to consciousness again,
 As through her lattice opened wide it still did come
 and go,
 The sweetness of that magical refrain !

As she lay a dreaming in her silken nest,
Came that May musician breaking on her rest,
Waking tender fancies in her gentle breast ;
 In morn'g's holy calm
 The minstrel's voice was balm,
As he gave his cheery greeting to the May !

A SONG OF SPRING.

(FOR MUSIC.)

I.

SPRING whispers us a welcome in soft winds from the
West,
With a sunny gush of gladness let us greet her !
Where the hawthorn blossoms sweetly around the finch's
nest,
Let us go, my Love, all merrily to meet her !
The deep blue depths of Heaven are stirred with sylvan
song,
Her balmy breath is bathing us—the days are light and
long—
As in the tender Springs of long ago !

II.

With footsteps light as fairies', Spring wanders through
the dells,
Beneath her ardent glances blush the flowers.
Oh, let us wander forth, my Love, to where the cushat
dwells,
And dream away the perfume-laden hours !

Y

322 *SKETCHES IN PROSE AND VERSE.*

In silent solemn solitudes, alone with God and thee,
With the bonny birds for minstrels, and the golden
 belted bee,
As in the happy, happy olden time !

IN MEMORIAM—PRINCESS ALICE.

IN laughing June—sweet summer's glowing prime—
 When blushing roses in our bowers sway,
The month of dreamers—that delicious time
 When lovers through the shady greenwood stray.

II.

The fairy town beside the restless deep
 Was all *en fête* and bright with flags and flowers,
Whilst to gay music, long processions sweep
 Through streets that now have blossomed into bowers.

III.

For England's heir, and England's future queen
 Have come to play a noble, kindly part,
Have come, when Eastbourne, pranked in richest green,
 Bids them right welcome with a swelling heart.

 * * * * *

IV.

But 'mid the pomp and pageantry, I trow,
 A sadness lurketh in each loyal breast ;
All think of one who, in the time of snow—
 The dark mid-winter—found eternal rest.

V.

As round the pile that bears her simple name,
Throng Eastbourne's chivalry, and ladies fair,
Whose blushes put their sister rose to shame,
Whose toilettes make the platform a *parterre*,

VI.

Down manly cheeks may steal a secret tear,
Tears too may dim proud Beauty's lustrous eyes,
As tender mem'ries of a vanished year,
When *she* was here, within the bosom rise.

VII.

When she was here—a few short years ago,
And with her children trod the breezy down,
Or drove, serenely happy, to and fro,
By ocean's marge—or through the lovely town.

VIII.

By all beloved—a Lady of the Land—
With soft sweet eyes, and mind without a stain,
Who sowed her bounty with no sparing hand,
And loved to smooth the pillow pressed in pain.

IX

The tears she dried, whilst she was spared to men,
The hearts she lightened, when all hope had fled,
Shall not be known till time has ended—when
The mighty ocean shall resign its dead.

X

Now, her royal brother, of his boundless grace,
 At last declares this welcome building free
 To those Disease has shattered for a space,
 Our humbler brethren in adversity.

XI.

This summer day on earth so fair and bright
 Will be a glad one in the realms above ;
 Above the brilliant throng, in calm delight,
 Her soul will hover upon wings of love.

XII.

Of self regardless, but to rescue those
 She loved so dearly from the jaws of Death,
 She braved unflinchingly the fiercest throes,
 And gently, gladly, yielded up her breath !

XIII.

Well may her spirit ever haunt the spot
 Where charity shall reap a rich increase,
 Linger unseen beside the humble cot,
 And at the darkest hour whisper "Peace !"

LIFE'S TWILIGHT TIME.

WHEN we have passed the rubicon
 That marks our manhood's prime,
 And have the dusky pathway won
 That threads life's twilight time,

Across youth's giddy garish days
A fair false haze is cast ;
All golden seem the winding ways
That wander through the past !

Alas ! could we the road retrace,
That winds through blooms long dead,
And loiter for a little space
Through lanes whose light has fled,
From blossoms sere at every turn
Would long-laid spectres start,
That now lie buried in that urn—
That secret shrine—the heart !

The stream of song from summer bowers
Seems sadder in its flow,
And far less fairy-like the flowers
Than in the long ago !
But all the sweetness loved of old
Haunts bloom and burden yet—
A shade rests o'er them dark and cold—
The shade of vain regret !

ONCE ONLY !

ONCE only for a few short moments, sweet
As we were onwards hurled,
Some fleeting glimpses of two tiny feet
The neatest in the world !

Some glances swift from dreamy deep blue eyes
 That stole my heart away,
 A girlish figure in some summer guise
 As radiant as the day !

A witching gipsy face with bonny brow
 Caressed by wine-dark hair,
 Whose fragrance seems to float around me now,
 Though *she* has sped—ah, *where* ?

An arch abandon had the winsome maid
 And then, her melting glance
 That woke rare visions of some greenwood glade,
 Where fairies weave the dance !

Though in the *flesh* my pretty one has fled,
 Her unsubstantial part
 Is with me waking ; and when Day is dead,
 Still nestles in my heart !

SEMPER EADEM.

I BID the Muse awake,
 To mount on wings of song.
 For dear old England's sake,
 Oh ! may her flight be strong !
 May she scatter all the shadows in her way !
 For the skies are overspread
 With the storm-clouds dark and dread,
 And British Pluck is dead,
 Jingoës say.

That lie ! that blackest lie !
Should sear the lips of those
Who speak it, and thereby
Are shown their country's foes ;
For the calumny is borne upon the breeze,
From lip to lip doth leap ;
While Truth seems fast asleep,
And is sped across the deep
Purple seas !

The lands beyond the wave
Hear the slander with delight,
And still with unction rave
Of our England's woful plight ;
Not loth to see the " Little Island " down.
But traitors in the camp,
Howe'er they shriek and stamp,
Cannot quench Old England's lamp,
Of renown !

But all good men and true,
Who love their fatherland,
Know well the wreck and rue
War works with right red hand,
And treat the loathsome libel with disdain.
They'll not to panic yield,
But in the tented field
Full well the sword would wield
Once again !

That spirit stern and bold,
Has never passed away ;

What Albion dared of old
 Will Albion dare to-day,
 Should the time of trial dawn on us once more.
 Aye, strong to do and dare—
 For British bosoms fair
 Still suckle heroes there,
 As of yore !

A LOVE STORY.

It was when Spring had come again
 With gentle gales, and rhythmic rain,
 When countless flowers, passing sweet,
 Burst into bloom beneath my feet,
 That Celia stole upon my sight,
 A perfect form of "life and light."

It was when sylvan song was hushed,
 And roses in her bower blushed,
 When we sat lost in fairy dreams,
 Our senses lulled by falling streams,
 That, toying with a truant tress,
 I heard her faintly whispered "Yes."

It was when Summer days had fled,
 And all its dear delights were dead,
 When, like an alchemist of old,
 Autumn had turned the trees to gold,
 I placed upon her finger fair
 The ring which *still* reposes there.

It was when Winter had unfurled
His banner o'er a frozen world,
When biting blasts did shrilly blow
Across a weary waste of snow,
I laid my pretty one to rest
In Mother Earth's ungenial breast.

LODMORE (WEYMOUTH).

THE lonely marsh, so dank and drear,
I traverse in the vernal year,
Where withered rushes, sere and brown,
Beneath my tread are beaten down.

Athwart the dusky flats a gleam
Strikes here and there—some cold clear stream,
Where stately swans, in robes of snow,
Are moving ghost-like to and fro.

The lapwing wheels with dreary cry
Above the waste. Sad seagulls fly
Above my head on ashen wings ;
The skylark, as he rises, sings.

The brisk grey birds,¹ in couples move
Across the solitudes I love :
Their tails they flirt on mound or stone ;
Their whistle makes me less alone !

¹ The Wheatears.

A solemn scene, and as I glance
Across the barren, bleak expanse,
Across my meditative soul
The stream of Time doth backward roll.

The marsh is rife with light and glee,
Transformed into a sunlit sea :
Afar I see the shelving shore,
Where frown the beetling crags of yore.

Rude craft with beauty freighted, sweep,
Across the azure dimpled deep ;
Where sang the lark so wild and clear
Sweet girlish voices charm my ear.

They die away—again I stand
At twilight on that lonely land—
The sunlit sea and faces fair
Fade fast into the things that were !

LONDON IN 1900.

I HAD a vivid dream the other night,
And still its wonders haunt my waking sight.
The vision was prophetic, said my soul ;
But, anyhow, I deemed it passing droll.
It was in London—that was very plain—
I rubbed my eyes, and stared with might and main,
For o'er the City sure a change had come,
Which, as I marked it, almost struck me dumb !

From rostrums standing 'mid a surging sea
Of heads, street orators yelled hideously,
Decrying virtue as a worn-out jade,
By manhood scorned—repellant to the maid ;
But lauding vice as *far* the sweetest thing—
The balm of Life, and guiltless of a sting !
Besant and Bradlaugh, as I saw, were there,
Scoffing at God, and ridiculing Prayer,
Whilst ever and anon loud plaudits rang
Through the dense air, and ribald songs were sang.
Though 'twas the Sabbath, bells pealed forth in vain,
Few sought the churches, but to boat and train
Rushed maddened throngs, to move in Pleasure's wake,
And at her bowl their fevered thirst to slake.
The time seemed changed—it was a weekday now ;
The streets were thronged, as with a puzzled brow
I moved along the old familiar ways,
Marked costly carriages, and prancing bays ;
Their occupants were dames of low degree,
Whose looks and garb proclaimed vulgarity.
But on each box a courtly coachman sat
With mimic leaves entwined about his hat,
Leaves of the strawberry, all wrought in gold,
The footman, too, was wondrous to behold !
He, too, had all the bearing of a Peer,
His features proud, his countenance austere.
With anxious mien I stopped a passer-by,
And asked the cause of this anomaly.
He stared—his eyes seemed starting from his head ;—
“ Hast thou,” cried he, “ returned here from the dead ?

Knowest thou not that Peers are menials now,
 And earn a competence by sweat of brow ?
 Knowest thou not the 'nouveaux riches' defy
 The Dukes and Duchesses of days gone by ?
 The 'nouveaux riches,' whose wealth has won the day,
 Whilst lords and ladies really 'clear the way' !
 Look yonder ! " Turning my astounded gaze,
 I saw a sight that filled me with amaze !
 A high-bred lady, delicate and fair,
 Armed with a besom, swept a crossing there !
 Taking the pennies with a natural grace
 That spoke the ancient lustre of her race.
 " On ! " cried my friend—and pushing me along
 Where Piccadilly claimed her densest throng,
 I saw more noblemen upon the seat
 Of servitude ; whilst sailing down the street
 Were lovely courtesans, all gay and young,
 Who each on arm of mincing dandy hung.
 Jests vile and ribald floated on the breeze—
 Do what you choose, and say whate'er you please !
 No sense of decency, no sense of shame,
 In brazen beau or daring, dimpled dame !
 Shocked beyond measure, to my friend I said,
 " The Bible here would seem but little read ! "
 He laughed. " The Bible ! " cried he, with a sneer,
 " That farce *has* certainly exploded here !
 That book of fables, fitted but to wile
 Away an hour, when we wish to smile !
 It says 'one wife,' one only at a time—
 We rail at that absurdity sublime.

The ring still throw as sops to clerics' views,
But change our wives as often as we choose !”
Then on he led me through the busy Strand,
Where Lust and Mammon sauntered hand in hand—
Where prints whose lewdness set my cheeks aglow
Were lauded openly by high and low ;
Where countless wires deftly reared on high
Almost obscured the dreary, leaden sky,
Though when a break disclosed the upper air,
I saw balloons by thousands sailing there.
Smart lady doctors rattled gaily past,
And lady lawyers looked at me aghast.
The sweet girl graduate brushed me with her skirt,
And plainly reckoned me as so much dirt !
The “ House ” we saw : a lady quite at ease
Controlled the male and feminine “ M.P.s.”
St. Paul's we entered, where a surpliced belle
Preached to some dozens on the woes of hell !
Whilst in the streets I saw the law defied,
And luckless folks garrotted at my side.
“ Police ! Where are they ? ” cried I to my friend,
But he had gone—streets, people, slowly blend
All indistinctly in one neutral grey,
And I awoke at rosy dawn of day.

(*Society.*)

THE WISHING-WELL.

(AT UPWEY, NEAR WEYMOUTH, DORSET.)

It was the merry month of March,
The breezes in their play

Shook the green tassels of the larch,
And bent each budding spray.
Old Boreas slumbered in his lair
And left the world at peace,
A vernal softness filled the air—
Above, sailed clouds of fleece ;
From every hedge the celandine
Gleamed forth—a golden boon—
As on that pleasant quest of mine
I sped that afternoon.
I passed the grey, romantic mill
That nestled in the dell,
Where chattered on that crystal rill
The children loved so well :
Steep, wooded heights rose green above,
Where cawed the sable throng ;
The cushat moaned unto his love,
The merle sang loud and long.
So up the lovely Vale I hied,
Fair Upwey's rustic street,
While little people, merry-eyed,
Tripped by on tiny feet.
My dog—old Scout—explored the glen,
The goal he seemed to guess,
Revolving in his wisdom, then,
What wish *he* should express !
At length, beside the village school,
The quaint old church hard by,
We came upon the mystic pool,
My ancient friend and I.

There was the streamlet's sacred head,
Where, shaded all day long,
The silvery spring, from golden bed,
Welled up with low, sweet song.
A child rushed out—a little lass—
From ivied cottage near,
In one small hand she grasped a glass
To catch the waters clear.
I felt it was a solemn rite,
A youthful Priestess, she,
From out the well some tricky sprite,
I thought, might speak to me.
But no! my Priestess merely dipped
Her tumbler in the spring,
Then lightly to my side she tripped,
While Scout stood wondering!
The rites began—she muttered low
“First wish, but not aloud,
Then drink, and o'er left shoulder throw
The water left.” I bowed
In silence, did her high behest
In fear akin to awe,
Scout locked his wishes in his breast
And drank, too, as we saw.
His wish I fondly think I know,
 (“’Twas for a *juicy* bone !) ;
But to the giddy world, I trow,
I may not tell my own !
The deed was done—a blissful calm
Fell straightway on my heart,

I blessed the Priestess—crossed her palm
 With “siller”—for *her* part.
 Then sadly in the dying day
 We bid the Well “adieu.”
 Reader, believe me when I say,
 I'm *your* “*Well-wisher*,” too !

Envoi.

“*Let* well alone !” the adage runs,
 My jaunt I don't deplore ;
 It furnished me with two bad puns
 If it did nothing more !

THE WITCH AND THE LADY.

(IN THE MENDIP CAVERNS, AT WELLS.—

AUGUST 17TH, 1885.)

How fiercely smote the sun
 Upon the long, white road,
 As through the scorching heat
 We sought the dim retreat,
 Of that weird witch who dwells alway
 Beyond the bright domain of day !
 With throat and brain aflame,
 We to the Cavern came—
Then passed within, and left behind,
 The burning sun—the grateful wind—
 Passed from the blinding glare
 Into the cool dark air,
 Where the dead stillness fell like balm
 On troubled spirits—where the calm

Was even that of the voiceless tomb,
A breathless silence, and fraught with doom.

Grasping a taper with uncertain hand,
The guide we followed through the winding way,
Stupendous walls of rock around us stand,
Whence hang the stalactites in grand array.

Deeper—and deeper still we go,
With footsteps faltering and slow,

Adown a jagged stair,
The fearful shadows darker grow,

And colder yet the air !
Anon, we reach the level ground once more,
And in the parlour of the beldame dread,
That ancient hag who witched the place of yore
We stand as in some dwelling of the Dead !

Trickles a rill with dismal sound
Amid the solitudes profound—
As, drop by drop, the unseen water falls
Far in the darkness of those lonely halls,
We hear the crackle of a match—and lo !
The benzine sheds a lurid glow
Athwart the gloom that chills us so ;
Strange sheets of azure-coloured flame
Illume the mansion of the fearsome dame,
Across that inky pool they run,
That never saw the blessed sun—
The vaulted chamber meets the eye
In all its awful mystery.

And where that pool so black and grim
 Lies in recesses deep and dim,
 The horrid witch long turned to stone
 Is brooding silently—alone !
Now, wrapped in azure flames she seems
 Some weird monstrosity who dreams
 Away the hours in that dark domain,
 Till she shall start to baleful life again !

But who sits motionless beside
 The margin of that windless tide ?
 A lady young and wondrous fair,
 With gleaming coils of golden hair,
 Who moveth not—who speaks no word.
 The dropping rill alone is heard !
 My heart stands still—I hold my breath—
 Oh, is it Life? or is it Death?
 When lo ! on me she turns her eyes
 That burn like brilliant sapphire skies
 E'en through that fading lurid light,
 That soon will be all quenched in night.

One loving look—no further sign—once more
 She dreameth by that solitary shore !
 As I advance, she fadeth into space,
 Merely the fleeting outline of a face,
 And then the desolation of before !
 But 'twas enough ! I knew her—God above !
What drew a Being all loveliness and love
 Into that haunted home.

Where echo and her sister silence dwell
For evermore? no mortal tongue may tell
My wild amaze—the mystery is known
To Him in Heaven alone!

Away we sped with cautious tread
A lighted taper leaving burning,
Which shone afar—a mystic star—
As through the lonesome path returning,
We backwards glanced at that witch'd spot
The heart of the unhallowed grot—
And as I marked that taper's ray
In the dim distance far away,
I heard her whispered name,—
But knew not whence it came,
Spoken *somewhere* in those halls,
Where the blackest darkness falls;
Echoed lightly through the aisles
Where the witch did work her wiles,
Growing fainter—fainter still,
Till it died away!
High Heaven guard my love from ill!
Dreams she amid the darkness still?
Ah! who may say?

AT MICHELHAM PRIORY!

THE burning beams upon a fair face beat,
And smote her tangled hair,
As on she tripped with tiny twinkling feet,
Through scenes divinely fair

From the still pool forget-me-nots I drew ;
She laid the sweets to rest
In all the glory of their stainless blue
Upon her gentle breast.

For her I plucked the loosestrife's purple spire,
The woodbine creamy white—
Till we emerged from that fierce bath of fire
Into the wood's soft night.

She moved before me down the narrow glade,—
So light her fairy tread,
It could not harm the sweetlings of the shade,—
Each bowed its pretty head

In love and reverence, as their Queen went by,
And as from sight she passed,
Once more each head was proudly raised on high,
Admiring to the last !

At length, the dim grey ruin rose above
The tresses of the trees ;
The lark was deep in cloudland, warbling love,—
The swallow in the breeze,

As underneath the portals old we sped,
And up the winding ways,
That woke strange mem'ries of the pious dead,—
The monks of other days !

Then on the summit of the ancient tower—
The spell of perfect peace
Held both our spirits for a little hour,
Beneath the clouds of fleece !

The dark deep moat far far beneath us lay,
Upon whose windless wave
The gold and silver lilies slept away,
Motionless as a grave !
And as we took the quiet summer scene
To rest within the heart,
The glory passed—a shadow came between—
Fate willed that we should part !

But ever as Life's rapid stream doth roll
Towards the shoreless sea,
That summer day will slumber in my soul,
A magic hour to me !

TRAPS AND TORTURE.

THE goosequill trembles in my nervous hand ;
My pulses throb—my cheeks are all aflame.
Am I awake ? Is this a Christian land ?
The answer comes not. Heads are bowed in shame !
Shame that a thousand tortured creatures lie,
E'en as I write, held fast by ruthless steel,
Condemned a cruel lingering death to die,
Without one pen to paint the pangs they feel.

God made them all ; but it was left for man
With dread intent to lay the deadly snare,
And thus abridge the short yet happy span
Of life which He had willed them. Can we dare

To throng His temple on His holy Day,
 Whilst helpless animals are racked with pain?
 Can we—smug Pharisees—for mercy pray,
 Whilst these dumb things appeal for it in vain?

And all for what? That man may work his will
 In bloody “battue,” with his feathered spoil;
 That he some scores of half-tame birds may kill,
 Deeds must be done which make a MAN’S blood boil!
 These wretched victims follow, as we know,
 The instinct One has planted in their breast;
 For this, are doomed to agonizing throes,
 By keeper’s nod, or landlord’s stern behest!

’Tis the old story—at the gnat we strain,
 The camel swallowing with face serene;
 Protecting pigeons on the pleasant plain,
 And gazing smiling on the darker scene!
 Can we at night recline in selfish ease,
 Whilst in the dark these hellish deeds are done?
 Can we—in peace—dream happy dreams, whilst these
 Poor bleeding wretches wait the mocking sun?

And Law is silent!—Law, which should awake
 At Mercy’s call, and sternly cry “Beware!”
 Which, at a word, should sweep from copse and brake
 The fearful engines boldly planted there!
 Thus may we win approval from above,
 And walk erect beneath the skies once more,
 Whilst meek-eyed Pity, and her sister Love,
 Make earth an earnest of a brighter shore!

WHAT ABOUT THE HARE?

PROTECT the Pigeons? Certainly, we cannot carp at that!
But savagery oft is shown in worrying a Rat;
The Bill should be much amplified to make its working
fair,
And if Brutality is banned, then how about the *Hare*?

To pop at Pigeons, as we do, is sorry sport enough;
But if we don't protect *him* soon, the Fox will take the
huff!
A creature hunted to the death our bliss (?) can hardly
share,
And if the *Fox* claims clemency, then how about the
Hare?

The Fox is vermin, in a sense, and poultry prone to eat,
And so being torn to tatters, perhaps, is retribution
meet;
The Rat is scarcely odorous, as we are well aware,
But if we treat *them* cruelly, then how about the
Hare?

The harmless Puss, with big bright eyes that seem for
peace to plead,
To let the greyhounds worry her, is sorry sport indeed!
No—no, good Mr. Anderson, to make your measure
“square,”
Fox, stag, and rat a corner claim—and last, not least,
the *Hare*.

DA FLORES LIBERIS!

The wan worn children pine away,
 Pent in close alleys drear and dark,
 They never scent the hawthorn spray,
 Nor hear the carol of the lark.

The west wind wanton's o'er the lea,—
 The dimpled ocean laughs in light—
 A thousand meads are fair to see,
 But no pale faces are in sight.

Deep shadowy woodlands bright with bloom,
 Day after day deserted lie,—
 Go drag the children from the gloom
 To pluck the wildlings 'ere they die!

The flush of poppies mid the wheat,—
 The silvery spray of secret streams—
 For *us* may make existence sweet,
 But only come to *them* in dreams!

HYPNOTISM.

'Twas night—reclining in my chair—
 I mused upon the absent "fair."
 My Daphne, dearer than the day;
 She then was *wearry leagues away*
 What of it? Soul was linked to soul,
Hers lay within my sure control;
 By *concentration* deep—intense—
 Of wizard will, the bounds of sense

Would be o'er leaped ; and she would stand
 A servant at her master's hand !
 So, wizard will to work I set,
 It waxèd stronger—stronger yet,
 Until my very soul went forth
 From its coarse casket—flashing north—
 Fettered the fairy in her bloom,
 And pointed to my distant room !
My soul returned to fleshy shrine ;
 But *she* who kept that heart of mine,
 Material barriers yet must pass,
 Ere she could clasp my neck, alas !
 The hours slid *slowly by*—Hush ! Hush !
 My nerves are strained,—a footstep ! Hush !
 'Tis hers, by Heaven—her tresses blown
 About my face ! My own ! My own !
 Upon my heart she lay, and swore
 That she would leave me *nevermore* !

JUMBO. (IN MEMORIAM.)

WITHIN my eye a sacred tear doth quiver
 To think our "*Friend*" from earth hath passed away,
 Jumbo, at last has crossed the ice-cold river,
 Beyond the bright familiar realms of day.
 Huge though his frame, he owned the strength of *Love*,
 A baby elephant he yearned to save.
 His home is now in Paradise, above,
 Of *such* affection *earth* is not the *grave* !

Dear to the little ones who loved him so,
 Whose tiny lips would lisp his homely name,
 He never *lost* a friend, or made a foe.
 Of whom among us can we say the same?
 But light is breaking thro' the Cypress gloom,
 Nor need poor Scottie sit disconsolate ;
 His " Pet " will rove 'mid amaranthine bloom ;
 And greet his master at the " Golden Gate " !

IN THE SHRUBBERY !

(AT THE ELMS, CRAYFORD, KENT.)

A TENNIS ground—banked in with brightest bloom,
 A bloom of flowers of the olden time,
 Sweet-william, pink, and marygold,
 Pentstemon, hollyhock, and lily,
 That fairest of the flowery fold—
 Sweet marjoram and daffodilly !
 Dim silent shrubberies lie around,
 Where reigns a silence most profound
 When day is done—
 Dark winding labyrinthine ways
 Through which the lonely dreamer strays,
 Who hates the sun.
 But from the depths of yonder darkling dell
 Those fateful glooms the poet loves so well,
 Voices I knew of yore,
 Ascend to me upon the evening gale,
 Drowned ever and anon by its wild wail,
 Then sadly sweet once more !

One voice both soft and low,
A voice the angels know
And love to hear at evening's quiet hour,
Floats upwards from the dell—
And that sad word—"Farewell"
Falls on the silence of my dusky bower—
The night grows darker, and the winds more chill,
Those sylvan glooms seem fraught with unknown ill,
As by that tearful word
The silence deep is stirred.

But in the glowing summer afternoon,
When in a golden swoon,
The weary woodlands lie—
I see a girlish figure stand
Her trusty tennis bat in hand,
Beneath the fir-tree's shade.
Bright tressed, with laughing eyes of blue,
That shame the speedwells' hue,
In summer guise to match her eyes,
She grows into the shady space,
Her radiant, lovely girlish face
Framed by the cool dark evergreen
That o'er the lawn doth lean—
Love in her shining eyes, and on
Her parted lips a triumph won!
The ball poised lightly on her fingers
As she would serve—yet still she lingers—
That phantom ball will never quit
The hand that is detaining it.

But *she* is ever standing there,
 Clasped by the scented summer air,
 A picture that can never fade
 Beneath the fir-tree's shade.

WHICH IS IT?

Does she look best in blue or pink?
 The former suits her best, I think,
 But yet, last eve in pink bedight
 She looked divine by candle-light!
 "But is it *pink*, or is it *blue*
 That 'fetches' *most*? come tell me true."

I put the question to my eyes
 And they replied to my surprise—
 "We're puzzled still and cannot tell
 Which tint suits *best* this laughing belle;
 The violet's blue—yon rose is pink—
 And both are beautiful we think."

I saw her coming o'er the lawn,
 Lapped in the golden light of morn,
 And to myself I sagely said
 I'll ask the nymph herself—instead—
 "Oh tell me quick, and tell me true
 Which is the *most* bewitching hue?"

She dropped a curtsey—brushed her hair
 From off her forehead white and fair,

She laughed at me, this saucy girl
And showed two gleaming rows of pearl,
"You've seen me, sir, in pink and blue,
And I am sure that *both* fetch *you*."

IN THE ROW.

(IN THE SEASON.)

THE air is soft—the vernal skies
Are bluer than Belinda's eyes,
The fragrance of the milk-white May
Is wafted from the dewy spray.
Whilst here upon the pleasant "Row"
Is flitting by the wonted show
Of Beauty poised on shapely steed,
A pageant rich and rare indeed.

Let ladies first my muse beguile,
So turn we to their classic "Mile,"
Where countless carriages roll by,
Whose occupants my pen defy.
Soft creamy laces—toilettes sweet—
Make man's bewilderment complete,
Nor dare I tread that dread domain,
Where Worth and Cie. so sagely reign.

Here on "The Row" another stream
Is passing like a morning dream ;

Here girlhood sways the dainty rein,
And gently strokes the flowing mane ;
Young cheeks are flushed—we love them so—
With perfect health's divinest glow,
And maids those roses win once more
They lost upon the ballroom floor !

A lady looks her best, I ween,
When on her prancing palfrey seen ;
Her fairy form so lithe and slim,
Arrayed in habit neat and trim,
With glowing cheeks and gleaming hair,
Misogamists must own her fair,
As on their wearied, jaded sight
She flashes, radiant with delight !

Equestrians of that luckless sex
Which winsome flirts delight to vex,
Are riding gaily by the side
Of Sister Sweet, or future bride !
Soft nothings reach the careless ear
Of foppish idlers lounging near ;
In rippling laugh, and merry jest
We see vast London at its best.

Against the railings heavy swells
Are leaning, whilst resistless belles
On foot are slowly sailing past,
Whose air and slang proclaim them "fast !"

Sport on, ye butterflies ! Be gay,
Sip Pleasure's vintage while ye may,
Anon, the crowded, heated room
Shall steal away your transient bloom.

LINES ON MY SCOTCH TERRIER "PEPPER."

HE has a ginger-coloured coat,
Sweet white-tipped paws, and loving eyes,
This four-legged pet on which we dote,
Who's worth a hundred thousand "Skyles !"
Pure Gaelic blood without a stain,
Is coursing through his every vein.

His pretty ways have long since won
The hearts that beat around him here ;
His "tricks" are fraught with endless fun
To friends who come from far and near.
The crowning one concerns a mat,
And ladies sometimes scream at that !

A purse (well lined, I hope) is laid
Upon the rug, and "Pep" is told
To keep from each felonious maid
And plotting man the precious gold.
His mien may well the weak amaze,
For loving eyes with fury blaze !

He guards his "El Dorado" well,
And will not brook his master then ;

Though why the purse should work this spell,
 Alas ! is quite beyond my ken !
 From some strange link with long ago,
 The whilom friend becomes a foe !

He used to play the truant, too,
 But that was in the days of yore,
 When close on midnight I and Loo
 Would hear him scratching at the door !
 With mud bedaubed, and cold and wet,
 The " prodigal " was welcome yet !

His " wild oats " now, I think, are sown,
 He loves the cheery warmth and light,
 And far too sensible has grown
 To wander wearily at night !
 Experience may have made him sage,
 For he long since began to age !

Yet he can frolic still, I ween,
 And on his " hinds " can deftly walk,
 Dies daily for his gracious Queen,
 And in his doggish way can talk !
 So staunch a guard, so true a friend—
 We dare not think about the end !

And yet why not ? They *never* die !
 Our precious pet will surely wait
 To greet us in the bye-and-bye,
 When we pass through the golden gate !
 Anon, beyond the solemn stars
 His paws will beat the golden bars !

ANTI-JINGO SONG.

"BLOOD and thunder!" "Blood and thunder!"
Is the Jingo's cry;
Quiet folk look on in wonder,
Merely asking "Why?"
If these "heroes" pant for battle,
And the muskets' deadly rattle,
Craving to be slain like cattle,
Let them—let them die!

CHORUS.

Let the Jingo's go, boys,
Shouting to the fray;
They are brave, we know, boys:
Let them lead the way!

II.

War is not all guilt and glory,
Trappings, pomp, and blare;
Some could tell another story—
Ask the maiden fair,
When the trump is loudly pealing,
And the smitten form is reeling;
She is in her chamber kneeling—
Weeping—weeping there!

CHORUS.

III.

If it must be, we are ready
Now, to win the bays—
Arm as stalwart, aim as steady,
As in other days!

A a

Yet may Peace on silver pinions
 Brood above our fair dominions,
 Shaming Jingo's braggart minions
 With her hallowed rays !

CHORUS.

¹ A WELCOME !

COULD there have been a more auspicious day
Than this, the first of bonny blooming May,
 For thy appearance, comely virgin sheet,
 Whose earliest issue we so gladly greet ?
 And, as we greet thee, let us all confess—
Print for thy debut is a charming dress !
 Thou art attended by thy *Pages* too
 In black and white—a trim though silent crew
 Who stand in *columns*—suitable array,
 For a *Review*—the “ knowing ones ” will say !
 Though they will change their colours, and instead
 Of black and white, will certainly be re(a)d !
 Go, little venture, go thy modest ways !
 We cannot doubt thou yet wilt win the bays
 For trusty news, for criticism smart,
 And due regard for all the paths of art !
 Thou art a *Tory* in thy creed, but so
 Are *all* the *ladies* wheresoe'er we go !
That little difference need ne'er divide

¹ On the first appearance of the *Eastbourne Review*, 1st May, 1885.

My heart and thine—nor keep me from thy side !
Yet once again, my blessing on thee light,
Go thy pure way, and battle for the right !
“ *In Review Order !* ” let good men and true
The term transpose, and *order the Review !*

THE GORDON MEMORIAL.

A MONUMENT to Gordon ! England, say !
Shall sculptured marble blazon forth his fame ?
He needs it not—that would not add *one* ray
To the bright halo that surrounds his name.

No costly column pointing to the sky
Will him the more to English hearts endear,
We read *his* story in the kindling eye,
The bent, bared head, the tributary tear.

And though to pour our gold and silver in,
Be deemed an honour by a mourning land—
A sacred duty—surely 'twere a sin
To leave unpaid a tribute yet more grand.

Feed we the starving, free the fettered slave
In far Soudan, and play *his* noble part !
That were a monument to mark the grave
Of one who slumbers in his country's heart.
(*The Graphic.*)

DON'T TELL !

(FOR MUSIC.)

I KNOW of a sweet little nook by a stile,
 But I won't say *where* !
 Yet it was delicious to dream awhile,
 In the shadow *there* !
 Pleasant to rest where the winds are low,
 Where the dove makes moan—and the blue-bells blow,
 With the merriest maid in the world to woo,
 But I won't say—*who* !

II.

We lingered long in that nook so green,
 But I won't say *when* !
 Though the merle wots well of the spot I mean,
 For *he* saw us *then* !
 I drew from the beck a "forget-me-not ;"
 As she took it, I said—but I won't say *what* !
 And a glad gleam shot through her soft blue eye,
 But I won't say—*why* !
 Not I ! not I !

AD PALLIDAM MORTEM.

OH, steal not to my side, when I am lying
 In the closely curtained room,
 Where the walls are staring blankly at the morta'
 Who is drawing to his doom—

But where the fairest flowers
Are twined about deep bowers
Oft wet with silver showers—

Let me hear
That solemn whisper wafted on the wind
“The time has come for thee to leave behind
“This garish earth, and each familiar scene,
“For a new home—one holier—more serene
Than this—”

Come not in winter's dark and dreary season,
When the world is swathed in snow,
And the wind is wailing wildly o'er the uplands
In its ecstasy of woe !

But when the red rose blushes,
And 'mid the moist green rushes
The gladsome rillet gushes,
Cool and clear.

There where the aspens weave a tender shade
For love-lorn swain, and sweet compliant maid,
Where the brown bees with drowsy murmur roam,
Pale King, O prithee, call me softly home
At last !

'Twould be passing sad to drift away in darkness,
To that far-off twilight shore
When Nature's mighty countenance is frowning,
And the sullen tempests roar.
But when the woodlark's winging
His way to Heaven—singing—

With woodland music ringing
 In my ears—
 Let me depart into "the silent land,"
 A lovely posy locked within my hand,
 Thy summons borne upon the gentle breeze
 That stirs the tresses of the trembling trees,
 At Eve—

A last look at the landscape's glowing glory
 Through the film of dying eyes,
 And *then* to close them peacefully for ever
 On the soft blue summer skies !
 By Lethe's wave o'ertaken,
 To sleep—then softly shaken
 By seraphs, to awaken
 In a clime,
 Where brighter blooms than those of earth abound,
 And dells with sweeter melodies resound,
 Where couched supine by some eternal stream,
 Life's "fitful fever" seems an idle dream—
 No more !

TORQUAY.

DELIGHTFUL Devon, where these eyes
 Of mine first opened on the light !
 A lotus-land of sapphire skies,
 Of roses red, and brooklets bright !

An exile from thy sunny shore,
I crave the pinions of the dove,
To mount aloft, and swiftly soar
Towards the bonny home I love.

Torquay ! where I would live and die,
That queens it by the dark blue deep,
Thy charms my puny pen defy,
Yet in my soul's recesses sleep !
Those terraced heights that proudly crown
The glorious bay's enchanting scene !
The dimpled coves and breezy Down,
The rocks all prankt with living green.

Thy wooded steeps I climb again
In fancy, though so far away.
List to the murmur of the main,
And watch the snowy gulls at play.
Through shady dells and lonely leas
I wander in a waking dream,
Where, through the rifts in leafy trees,
I catch the summer ocean's gleam.

I see the gay, romantic "Strand,"
With those bright shops along the quay,
The varied shipping close at hand,
The waters bounding in their glee,
The broad, smooth roads that wind aloft
Among the villas white and fair,
Whilst silver showers, sweet and soft,
Diffuse rare beauty everywhere.

The deep green lanes, where in a maze
 Of richest bloom you linger long,
 The cottage homes that meet your gaze
 O'er which the blushing roses throng—
 All these the fevered brain will calm,
 And bring from wearing cares release,
 Will fall on restless souls like balm,
 And to the weary whisper—Peace !

Pass on to Paignton's pleasant coast,
 Where Devon's brightest eyes are found,
 The bachelor, howe'er he boast,
 Is soon a *captive* tightly bound !
 Each golden tress that flutters free
Some manly heart is sure to snare,
 So, when to Fairyland you flee,
 Of Devon's witching belles beware.

(*Society.*)

MY COURTING DAYS ARE DONE !

So ye would walk with me, Jennie,
 Adown yon leafy lane,
 And talk of happy times, Jennie,
 That ne'er will come again ;
 Ye would away with me, lassie,
 And all the gossips shun,—
 Alas ! my heart is cold, lassie,
 My courting days are done !
 Ye would that I should twine, Jennie,
 Wild roses in your hair,

Should sun me in your smiles, lassie,
And see you wondrous fair !
Ye would that I should press, Jennie,
The hand I never won—
Alas ! it is too late, lassie,
My courting days are done !

Ye would that I should breathe, Jennie,
Soft nothings in your ear,
And stroke those tresses bright, lassie,
That once I held so dear !
I'm old before my time, Jennie,
My race is nearly run ;
Go seek a younger love, lassie,
My courting days are done !

THE CLOSE OF THE SEASON.

THE curtain falls upon the scene once more,
Again Fate reaps as in the bygone years
A harvest strange, of mingled smiles and tears.
The reign of brilliant revelry is o'er,
Its triumphs numbered with the things of yore,
Its laughter hushed—its hopes and formless fears
Slowly consigned into their silent biers
In human hearts—yet on some sunny shore
Who knows what hopes may blossom into bloom?
What shadowy fears may into substance grow,

362 *SKETCHES IN PROSE AND VERSE.*

Branding this season with the stamp of doom ?
Its varied power we can never know
For good and evil, till the riven tomb
Declares Death dead, and that last trump shall blow !

A DEVON IDYLL.

'Tis leafy June ! How sweet to find a nest
In dreamy Devon—in the blissful time
Of blushing roses ! Heart and brain at rest,
And glowing summer drawing to her prime.

Now blythe Teign sings her softest, clearest song
Amid the boulders pranked with mosses green ;
Through crystal depths the troutlet shoots along
A living dart ; in solitudes serene

Far in the cool green woods, the brown bees roam
With drowsy murmur, on from bloom to bloom,
Where the blue cushat makes his quiet home,
And gnarled oaks weave a deep yet tender gloom.

Here by the world forgotten, we forget
Life's fret and fever for a little spell
In some dim nook, where silvery spray doth wet
The fragrant fern that wreathes some fairy well.

The vagrant zephyrs lightly come and go,
They kiss the loosened tresses of my love,
And fan her cheeks—then softly rock and slow
The wild bird cradled in the leaves above.

Upon the stern grey moorland far away
The sun beats fiercely—here at ease we lie
Screened from the burning splendour of the day,
While the hot hours do glide unheeded by.

THE LADY MADELINE.

THE Lady Madeline she stood within the chapel grey,
Before the painted window at purple shut of day.
On the pavement worn and olden,
Rays of sapphire, crimson, golden,
Softly streaming, set her dreaming
Of her hero far away.
Her lips did move in prayer for him, and dainty lips
were they !

The Lady Madeline mused on, no maiden fair as she
In all the Southern shires or bonny North-countree.
And the sunset's flush was flaming
O'er that neck the lily shaming,
Whilst the glory (famed in story)
Of her tresses swept her knee,
When lo ! a knight stole softly in—a goodly knight was
he !

The lady started as she heard that light and stealthy
tread,
And with a gesture of surprise she turned her shapely
head,

When a blush of dazzling brightness
 Dyed her cheek's transparent whiteness ;
 Joy returning, left them burning,
 For she thought he had been dead !
 And " Hast thou come, my true, true love ? " the only
 words she said.

One solemn moment at her feet that armoured knight
 did kneel,
 Then as he rose, her yellow hair streamed o'er the
 burnished steel.

For her lover true she knew him,
 As towards her heart she drew him,
 Long caressing—little guessing
 That a priest stood at his heel !
 Who waited on their love to set the Church's sacred
 seal.

A SEQUEL TO POE'S "RAVEN."

In the golden light of morning, when the sun the mists is
 scorning,
 And a flood of glory streameth through the lattice as of
 yore,
 Still, that dire shade undying plainly on the floor is
 lying,
 And the raven mocks my sighing, darkly brooding as
 before.
 Mutely mocking at my sighing, darkly brooding as
 before,
 Is the raven evermore !

In the noontide's garish splendour, when the cushat's
 moan is tender,
And the drowsy world is folden in a swoon by sea and
 shore,
Still, that fateful shadow falleth, which my stricken soul
 appalleth,
And a voice within me calleth vainly to the lost Lenore !
But unto the voice that calleth wildly to the lost
 Lenore,

 She shall answer—nevermore !

When the moon is high in heaven, and the shining
 sisters seven
Sparkle in their solemn beauty on the spangled azure
 floor,
Still, the shadow never ending with the moonlight soft is
 blending,
To my deep seclusion lending horror never felt before,
And my spirit by that horror that was never felt
 before,

 Shall be darkened—evermore !

In the winter midnight dreary, when my widowed soul
 droops weary,
And around my lonely dwelling shrieking tempests
 loudly roar,
Then, amid my dreams so doting, still I see that shadow
 floating,
And the raven's eyes seem gloating fiercely o'er my
 anguish sore,

And those eyes from contemplation of my anguish
 keen and sore,
 Shall be lifted—nevermore !

THE GHOSTS OF CHRISTMAS PAST.

I.

To-NIGHT's surroundings unsubstantial seem,
 Dim shadows—all unreal—so I would dream,
 Dream o'er yon firelight's warm and cheery ray
 Of Christmas scenes that long have passed away.
 A spirit takes me by the hand,
 And leads me into Shadow-land.

. * * * * *

II.

A fair form bends above my easy-chair,
 I feel the fragrance of her floating hair ;
 In one long look of love our glances meet,
 And *then* I know an angel's kiss is sweet.
 She talks in gentle tones, and low,
 But of the days of long ago.

III.

The room has changed to one I knew of old,
 My shoulder swept by shining skeins of gold,
 Her breath is cool upon my fevered cheek,
 My heart beats wildly, but I cannot speak.
 Forgotten annals—passing dear—
 Still melt like music on my ear.

IV.

Now out of vacancy a child has grown,
Whose bonny tresses mingle with her own,
She turns away to clasp him to her breast,
And seems to hush him lovingly to rest.
 Upon the walls the berries bright
 Are winking in the ruddy light.

V.

Mother and child fade slowly from my sight—
It is a chamber all ablaze with light,
A festive board whereon the goblets foam
With blushing wine—a Christmas passed at home.
 Far down the glittering ranks I see
 Those deep blue eyes still bent on me

VI.

Again a change ; a clash of Christmas bells
O'er snow-clad fields mellifluously swells ;
With sparkling icicles the boughs are spread,
As to the kirk we move with muffled tread.
 Those eyes look up at me, their sheen
 Is all unearthly as I ween.

VII.

Back to her Heaven has my angel flown,
And I am sitting silent and alone
By dying embers ; yet, a ghostly chime
From Dreamland's bells proclaims it Christmas time.
 Beside me lies a broken toy,
 But where is *he*—my baby boy ?

* * * * *

VIII.

Ye ghosts of Christmas past, what wizard hand
 Has called ye back to-night from Shadow-land ?
 Now into darkness ye dissolve, and, lo !
 A hand clasps mine, I hear a voice I know.
 They sing sweet carols at my door,
 The carols that they sung of yore.

IX.

No longer doubtful shadows hem me round,
 My heart leaps up responsive to the sound ;
 About me holly in profusion lies,
 And blithesome peals salute the frosty skies.¹
 My dreams are done—repinings cease,
 In those dear eyes are Love and—Peace !

A JUNE MORNING !

It was the “leafy month of June,”
 When birds and brooklets sang in tune,—
 A summer morning’s prime,—
 When life, with all its light and glee,
 Seemed like a fairy tale to me—
 The happy olden time !
 Unsunned as yet the scented air,
 The myriad blooms were fresh and fair,
 The rill ran clear and cold ;
 Above the hills did Phœbus peep
 O’er pastures, where the dew lay deep
 In chalices of gold.

The doves cooed low in calm content,
As down the tangled ways I went,
 And put the boughs apart ;
Whilst feathery clouds of silver spray
Flashed round me as I pushed my way
 Towards the woodland's heart.

Here in a quiet nook of green,
Where golden sunbeams slid between
 The leafy screen above,
A vision held my dazzled sight :
White arms—long floating tresses bright—
 And eyes all moist with love.

Wild roses, purest pink and red,
Were trailing idly o'er her head
 In sweet luxuriant strife.
In swift surprise, I held my breath ;
They framed a picture still as death,
 Yet beautiful as life !

And half in sunlight, half in gloom,
A wealth of tender azure bloom
 Around her haunt did rise ;
The golden summer's splendour rare
Slept in the glory of her hair,
 And in her lovelit eyes.

As silent pinnacles of snow,
When flushed with sunset's rosy glow,
 Seem lovelier than before,

B b

So, o'er her cheeks a bright blush sped,
And made her fairer as she fled—
I never saw her more !

GWENDOLEN.

I.

HER face is with me night and day,
Though weary years have rolled away,
Ah ! Shall I clasp her as of yore,
Yet never more !

II.

For me the bloom of life has fled,—
Its glory gone, its blossoms shed ;—
The dreary days that used to fly,
Glide sadly by !

III.

But Gwendolen will come again,
With flash of leaves and April rain,
And I, till then, to meet my fate
Still yearning wait !

(*Life.*)

"ONLY."

ONLY a cheek that is paling fast,
As the seasons roll away
Only a dreamer who lives in the past,
When every month was May !

Only a wan and sickly smile,
The ghost of the smile of yore ;
Only a little weary while,
And then the eternal shore !

Only a glimmer in faded eyes
Of many orbs once the sun ;
Only increasing secret sighs
For the goal that was never won !

Only a voice that is faint and low,
That carolled once with the best ;
Only a woman who longs to go
Where the sufferers are at rest !

TO CAWSAND BEACON.

THIS evening, o'er thy far stupendous crest,
I watched the daylight die :
Thou giant looming in the distant west,
Against the stormy sky !

And every morning as I gaily fling
My casement open wide,
I gaze upon thee, mute and wondering,
In all thy sunlit pride.

When merged the glory of the golden day
In twilight's purple sea,
My truant thoughts are ever far away,
Thou mighty one, with thee !

n b 2

Though rolling mists fast darkening the skies,
 May shroud thy lofty head,
 I know that phantom-like, thou yet shall rise
 Triumphant from the dead.

Deep stirring memories oft come to me
 Of those old glorious days :
 Again the foe is speeding o'er the sea !
 Again the beacons blaze !

And still thou reignest lonely, yet sublime,
 A landmark firm and sure !
 A standing mockery of ruthless Time,
 The Monarch of the Moor !

LINES UPON "THE CLOSE OF THE LONDON SEASON."

THE Park and the Row are forsaken ;
 The squares are as still as the grave ;
 The "Upper Ten" all have betaken
 Themselves to the moors or the wave.
 In Clubland the members are thinning ;
 Deserted is Hurlingham's sward ;
 Our nightingales soon will be winning
 Their bouquets and encores abroad !
 The cheeks we saw rapidly whiten
 Each day with the heat and the glare,
 Woo back from the breezes of Brighton,
 The bloom that once made them so fair !

Bound stationwards, hansoms are flying,
 Whilst "growlers" crawl close in their train ;
'Mid conquests, and heartaches, and sighing,
 The season has ended again !

(*Society.*)

MY RESOLUTION.

I'm going to give up Soda-and-B.
And take instead to gunpowder tea,
And let "Society" see in me
A steady and sober member !
I'm going to abandon the costly cheroot,
Archer's "Bird's-eye," and pipes to boot,
And even to learn to play on the flute—
 On the 31st November !

I'm going to renounce my Cousin "Bess,"
And send her back her locket and tress,
Then fly to some dreary wilderness,
Where it is ever December !
I'm going to marry a rich old girl,
With shining teeth of counterfeit pearl,
And learn her pampered poodle to curl—
 On the 31st November !

I'm going to retrench in the matter of fare,
Renounce hashed pheasant, and snipe, and hare,
And live as plainly as though I were
Secluded in Nova Zembla.
I'm going to abandon "I.O.U.'s,"
And snap my fingers at grasping Jews,
To eat cold mutton and Irish stews—
 On the 31st November !

I'm going to settle my tailor's bill,
 To rise at six, though the morn be chill,
 To write a poem all fire and thrill,
 Which all the world shall remember !
 I'm going to reform, whatever befall ;
 To give up opera, rout, and ball,
 And cease subscribing to Smith's bookstall—
 On the 31st November !!!

ODE TO MARCH.

MERRY March we love thee,
 Aye, we love thee well,
 Though the seas be roaring
 And the tempests yell.
 On the skirts of winter,
 Treading, dost thou come,
 Waking into uproar
 Woodlands sere and dumb.
 Boreas, fitting herald,
 Blows a royal blast
 On his trump, declaring
 Thou hast come at last !
 Not alone in anger
 Dost thou greet our Isle,
 But thy grim lips often
 Break into a smile—
 Then a dream of summer
 Floateth through the brain,
 As the lark from Heaven,
 Showers down his strain.

Then through fields of azure
Sail the cloudlets fair,
And a vernal softness
Lingers in the air.
Then thy stormy herald
Sinks awhile to sleep,
And the early wildlings
From their couches peep
Merle and mavis woo us,
Busied o'er their nest,
Winter all forgotten,
By a world at rest.

Suddenly thou springest
From thy wanton dreams,
And thy icy fingers
Lock again the streams !
They shall rend the vapours,
Which are lightly drawn,
Like a gauzy curtain,
Over vale and lawn.
Louder blasts and louder
Shall thy herald blow,
Blinding smarting faces
With the driving snow.
Sturdy giants rocking,
In their forest home,
And the stormy ocean,
Lashing into foam.
Thus thou makest merry,
In thy madcap way,

Like a joyous urchin,
 At his rudest play.
 Turning into uproar
 All that calm profound,
 Landing us in Bedlam
 At a single bound !
 Yet we love thee dearly,
 Health thy breezes bring,
 Royal are thy graces,
 Every inch a king.
 Now that dainty April,
 Cometh up this way,
 I this homely pæan
 Pipe thee, while I may.

THE APPROACH OF SPRING.

(TO A LADY.)

THE spring is drawing nigh, my love,
 More softly coos the cushat dove,
 The clouds take tender tints above.

Her gold and silver she has thrown
 On earth's brown lap. Now, March has blown
 His clarion, she will claim her own.

The warm wind whispers from the west
 To many a care-worn, weary breast
 Of halcyon days and coming rest.

'Tis spring who speaks ; and thus she saith,
" From far I waft a fond, faint breath—
I come anon to banish death ! "

The wild birds know that she is near ;
To-day they whistled in my ear
A welcome that was gay and clear.

She soon will steal upon the view,
And smile away the tears anew
That sparkle in her eyes of blue.

Yea ! on our vision she will loom,
To scatter sullen winter's gloom,
And wake the woodlands into bloom.

(Girls' Own Paper.)

FALLING LEAVES.

THE dry leaves fall in frequent showers
Of crimson, green, and gold,
A pensive sadness fills the hours—
The year is growing old !
One leaf will flutter to the ground
Upon a noiseless wing,
With but the semblance of a sound,—
A hollow lifeless thing !—
Another follows in its wake,
As silent in its flight,
Deserters twain from yonder brake,—
Mute harbingers of blight !—

Anon ! A moaning sad and low,
 As onward strides the blast,
 And torn in torture, to and fro,
 The beeches writhe at last !
 In coloured flakes their tresses fall,—
 A rain of red and gold !—
 A strangely woven funeral pall
 For yonder bosom cold !—
 The bosom of the earth we love,
 It waxes chill, I trow !
 But God shall weave for it above
 A saintlier shroud of snow !

FLOWERS OF JOY AND SORROW.

IN vesture spotless as the driven snow
 She heaps the crystal vase with dewy sheen—
 With green tones down the rich azalea's glow,
 And deftly slips the orange sprays between.
 Do visions swell that gentle bosom now
 Of bridal wreath upon her own fair brow ?
 Angel music o'er vale and lea
 Soon will be clashing merrily.
 Laughing too are the skies above ;
 Light winds whispering joy and love.

In robes as black as stately raven's plume,
 The weeping sisters weave a purer wreath,
 No flaunting flowers may the pall illumine,
 But lilies, whiter than the dead beneath ;

Sweet stephanotis—maidenhair may rest
Within the palms crossed softly on the breast.
Solemnly, slowly tolls the bell
Over the desolate, dreary dell ;
Sombre the heavens overhead,
Weeping now for the fair young dead.
(Girls' Own Paper.)

GOD BLESS HIM !

FROM the lips of a weary child,
The seal of suffering on her brow,
They came in accents soft and mild
As she her little head did bow—
At purple evening's quiet hour
When dew fell fast on brake and bower,
They mingled with her evening prayer
Those words so doubly hallowed there,
"God bless him !"

What had I done, poor guilty I,
A sinner of the deepest dye,
To win from one, as pure and true
As yonder rose of stainless hue
Those words so simple, yet so sweet,
Ascending to the Mercy Seat—
"God bless him !"

Nothing to merit them—Oh no !
Yet let the childish blessing go—
When the rough world is harsh and stern,
And friends all coldly from me turn,

Then, like a whisper strange and low
 Those words so sacred will, I know,
 From out the silence grow—
 Falling on the soul like balm
 In a hush of holy calm,
 “ God bless him ! ”

AN EARTHLY PARADISE !

EMBOWERED in roses, doth it stand
 The cosiest cot in all the land,
 With two dear Pugs on either hand
 Who watch its leafy portals !
Most quaint black noses have they got,
 They meet you on the garden-plot,
 Like gnomes they seem, who guard the spot
 From all intrusive mortals !

Here is a hostess, fair and free,
 In truth, the very one for me !
 A kindlier one you shall not see,
 So *débonnaire* and sprightly,
 What sweeter nook in which to rest
 Than this rose-mantled shady nest,
 Where Puck and Bogie greet the guest
 With tails that curl so tightly ?

You sip your tea, engirt with bloom,
 Then pass into the pretty room,
 As gentle evening's deep'ning gloom
 Descendeth on the bower.

The quiet stars bedeck the sky,
The wind amid the roses sigh,
Too swiftly do the moments fly
Until the parting hour !

THE ROYAL ACADEMY, 1885.

Here there is no strange *writing* on the wall,
As in Belshazzar's Babylon of old,
Which could the boldest, stoutest hearts appal,
And the swift ruin of his realm foretold.
Instead of this, a thousand gems of art
The Salon's walls make beautiful to-day,
Where brain and hand have deftly played their part,
And pour pure joy into the lap of May.

Here genius holds entranced a brilliant throng
With subtle counterfeit of wood and stream—
Of stirring scenes which to the past belong—
Or of such faces as we see in dream !
In luxury is lapped the sense of sight ;
On fancy's wings our spell-bound spirits soar,
And oft in future visions of the night
These bright creations will appear once more !

LIDFORD CASCADE.

I stood beneath the torrent with my love
In leafy June, when all the land was fair ;
From *her* soft eyes mine travelled far above,
Where pleasant music smote the summer air.

382 *SKETCHES IN PROSE AND VERSE.*

Down the sheer rock, some twenty fathoms deep,
The milky current leapt with muffled roar,
That slowly lulled the listless soul to sleep,
And sped it on to Dreamland's mythic shore.

Between two ridges pranked with freshest green
Flashed the white streak, on its impetuous way,
Till, at our feet, within a pool serene
It found a home. A cloud of silvery spray

Spread a delicious coolness thro' the glade,
And dashed our warm-bronzed cheeks; the hawthorn's
bloom

Was never sweeter. Merry minstrels made
Meet music for us in the grateful gloom.

The water avens with its orange bells
Nodded beside us in that dim retreat;
Where tricky fays by moonlight weave their spells,
And touch the sward with tiny twinkling feet.

Here we sat on, and dreamed till set of sun,
Love's gentle spirit hovering ever near;
Nor, till the shadows told us day was done,
Did we emerge into the twilight clear.

IN THE AUTUMN TIME.

AMONG the flaming leaves we stood together,
All in the glorious golden Autumn weather,
With sapphire skies above.

The sunbeams kissed her soft brown hair,
I *knew* her *true*—I *saw* her *fair*,
My heart was full of love !
I waited for *one* little word, ah ! me !
It tarried long beneath the chestnut-tree—
Ah me ! it tarried long !
Deep in the dell the dainty dove was cooing,
The merle knew well how madly I was wooing,
And sang his sweetest lay !
A bright tear trembled in her een,
A prettier blush was never seen—
Yet might she say me “Nay !”
At length it stole upon my ear, so *low*,
And yet so *clear*, it set my heart aglow,
That softly murmured “*Yes !*”

TO MADELINE !

You do mock this poet,
Winsome Madeline !
You are fair and *know it*,
Merry Madeline !
Love and you have gone a-Maying,
In your blue eyes he is playing,
In their dreamy depths delaying,
Gentle Madeline !
Lucky Love, who sweetly dwells
In those azure crystal wells ;
And if one the truth must tell,
The arch boy doth know it well,
Fairy Madeline !

For he *never* flies away,
 But abides there night and day ;
 In the sunshine's wanton glow
 He is laughing there, I trow ;
 Through the night-time's solemn gloom,
 Prisoned in that tender tomb,
 Where he may of dalliance dream,
 Bonny Madeline !

Love was sporting on a while,
 On his lips a sunny smile,
 When he fell into a snare—
 Tangled mesh of golden hair ;
 Struggled to escape, and fell
 Prone into a limpid well ;
 There the saucy archer lies
 Deep in some one's dancing eyes,
 Mirthful Madeline !

Mischief's imp, if signs tell true,
 In those depths is lurking too ;
 When you tire of pleasing,
 Then you take to teasing,
 Merry Madeline !

Alas ! those delicious vagaries !
 Those sudden capricious contraries !
 What mortal shall woo you and marry you ?
 And safe through life's tempests shall carry you !
 Who at last shall own you queen
 Of his heart, sweet Madeline ?

Often o'er that fair young face
Tender shadows flit apace,
Some mysterious mood revealing,
Inner depths of secret feeling,
 Depths which none may know !
But oftener bright as the morning,
When Phœbus the valley is scorning,
You stand like some beautiful vision,
A waif from dim bowers elysian.
I weave me your future's fair story,
As full in the glow of youth's glory
 Into my eyes you grow.
In memory's garden—ever green—
You will always grace the scene ;
Tropic clime, or realm of snow,
You will haunt the spot, I know ;
Never fading, ever seen,
Lovely, laughing Madeline !

ON THE APPROACH OF ALL FOOLS' DAY.

I.

HURRAH for bauble, cap and bells !
The classic " First " is drawing nigh,
When the great heart of Fooldom swells
 With pride beneath its panoply.

c c

II.

"Mankind are mostly fools!" so said
 Historic Chelsea's famous seer,
 A cynic's snarl—from malice bred—
 He *should* have added "*once a year.*"

III.

How Folly shrinks, through ages long,
 From Wisdom's keen satiric sword,
 How she must yearn (and is she wrong?)
 To turn the tables on her lord.

IV.

But *now* the holiday of fools,
 Their harvest-time is close at hand,
 When all the sages of the schools
 Are Folly's "butts" throughout the land.

ODE TO APRIL.

TIME cannot touch thy beauty, dainty maid,
 Or ever make thee staid!
 A rare abandon is for ever thine,
 As thou dost coyly twine
 The early wildlings dashed with dew,
 Sweet violets, and speedwell blue
 In thy long loosened hair!
 Unnumbered years have onwards rolled,
 And yet have tarnished not its gold,
 For thou art full as fair
 As in the shadowy days of yore,
 Ere man had marred this earthly shore!

Thy God *alone* beheld
In that dim time of eld,
Thy sunny smiles suffused with tears
As, from the radiant upper spheres,
Thou didst descend through cycles long
Upon the wings of fairy song
 To glorify the world !
Thine is eternal youth—thine eyes
The mirrors of the deep blue skies—
Thy home is in the realms above,
The tender bloom of health and love
 Pervades thy cheeks for aye,—
 Though ages roll away !
In sylvan solitudes profound,
Steals on the ear the sudden sound
 Of softest silv'ry showers ;
And here a thousand woodland bowers
All wreathed about with freshest flowers,
 Arise at thy sweet spell
 In every greenwood dell !
Buds burst above thy bright young head,
And blossoms break about thy tread ;
 Fragrant zephyrs shall caress
 All thy glowing loveliness.
As with tresses floating free,
Where the loneliest vistas be
Thou dost slowly glide again,
 O'er wood and wold to reign—
Bursting anew upon our raptured sight,
Like morning flashing from the womb of night.

A MAY DAY AT VENTNOR !

OF late a roaring stormy sea
 With billows mountains high,
 Dark demons shrieking in their glee—
 A sullen angry sky—
 Like an oasis in a storm-swept land
 Has this fair May day come,
 With soft blue Heavens—zephyrs bland—
 And burly Boreas dumb !
 And where was I a few short hours ago ?
 In a deep haunted woodland, all alone
 With God, the birds, and flowers ; in the glow
 Of tender sunlight, whilst the cushat's moan
 Was wafted to me on the summer air
 Through aisles of greenery ; and sweetest song
 Gushed from the foliage so fresh and fair,
 Whilst cool clear rillets flashed and foamed along.
 A forest haunted by the blossoms blue
 Of rare and lovely lungwort ; how my eyes
 Danced with delight at its entrancing hue,
 That shamed the splendor of the sapphire skies !
 But *one* thing only lacked the leafy scene
 To make it Paradise, and fill the soul
 With perfect peace—a girlish form to lean
 Upon my breast, who should unfold the scroll
 Of Nature's marvels with me, line by line.
 Where wert thou, Ladye Gwendolen,
 Upon that May day morn of cloudless splendor ?

“Far, very far away,”
I heard a soft voice say,
“I see a maiden golden-tressed and slender
“Musing alone in that enchanted land
“Where tiny wavelets fret the yellow sand
“On bonny Devon’s music-haunted shore,
“For ever—evermore !
“There with the stainless azure of the sea
“Reflected in her laughing eyes, sits she,
“Weaving visions bright yet deep
“Beside old ocean’s charmed sleep,
“And hearing in its ancient lullaby
“The distant echoes of the days gone by.”
She by the margin of the crystal seas
Dreaming the time away,
I resting, where the scented vernal breeze
Bends many a budding spray.
But dreamers *both—both* finding sweet
That Faëry Realm where Fancy dwells,
With young Hope sitting at her feet
And yielding to her soft delusive spells.

A SPRING SONG.

I.

AGAIN the daffodil is here,
As in the springs of old ;
And both my crystal vases clear
Are crowned with green and gold.

Again the primrose pure and pale
Is swept by many a vernal gale,
And gems the quiet wold.
The speedwell and the violet sweet
Are hiding in their old retreat.

II.

And oft the thought has come to me
That I would pass away,
When buds are bursting on the tree,
And April winds at play.
When many a shower of silver rain,
Should make the spot where I am lain,
Seem greener day by day,
And stately daffodils should wave
Their yellow plumes above my grave !

III.

Not oft the sound of human tread
Would break upon my rest,
But birds should carol o'er my head,
The strains that I love best.
Deep hidden in the forest dim,
The merle should chant his vesper hymn
And cushats come to nest,
When I am sleeping—whilst afar
Is shining cold the evening star.

IN MEMORIAM—THE ABBE LISZT.

I.

HE could be spared no longer from the glorious seraph
choir,
So Death, like an Angel, beckoned "the Master" to
come up higher;
There he is playing sweetly, and his harp is of virgin
gold,
The Immortals are tranced by his music, as we Mortals
were tranced of old.

II.

Here he was Music's chieftain, and he held the keys for
long
Of Melody's sacred portals, and the inner courts of
song.
He sped our souls to Heaven on the wings of some
deathless strain,
When the joy that possessed the hearer was ever akin to
pain.

III.

Lost to the earthly choir, but gained by the one
above,
His powers expanding daily, for his theme is undying
Love,
We are the silent mourners who bow to his spell no
more,
They shout a burst of welcome upon the Eternal
Shore!

(*Life.*)

HUMOROUS POEMS, AND PARODIES.



NEW VERSION OF A NURSERY RHYME.

Who won Miss Jenny?
"I," said young Bogle,
"With my bow and ogle.
I won Miss Jenny!"

Who heard him pop?
"I," said Miss Squeers,
"With my two itching ears,
I heard him pop!"

Who made him do it?
"I," said Miss Jenny,—
"The bashful young ninny.
I made him do it!"

Who'll tie the knot?
"I," said Dean R.—
"For the sake of the fee,—
I'll tie the knot!"

Who'll be best man?
"I," said Jack Bate,
"For I'll kiss saucy Kate.
I'll be best man!"

Who'll tell his Dad?
"I," said Tom Hare,
"And oh! won't he swear!
I'll tell his Dad!"

MY TAILOR.

I.

HE is a most mysterious elf,
Persuasive, 'cute, and calm,
I'm not a stupid man myself,
But *here* I yield the palm!
His measure I can never gauge,
With all my craft, in fine,—
But still this (haber)dashing sage
Has often taken *mine*!

II.

When "trying on" I need not say
My mind is on the rack,
As in his cool impressive way,
He chalks me down the back!
"I understand," he mutters, when
I've given him the cue,
But he chalks *me* not *it*, and then
He murmurs "That will do!"

III.

In early youth he loved the sea,
 Although it made him ill,
 And so—and this seems queer to me—
 He keeps a “*cutter*” still !
 His garments have a rustic air,
 And nothing closely sits ;
 I long to fight him then and there,
 And lick *him into fits* !

IV.

He’s witty ; when a coat I send
 Too crushed for public use,
 And ask him what he’d recommend,
 His *answer* is “ the *goose* ! ”
 He’s rude ; for when I face the storm,
 And brave the icy breeze,
 Thus needing something stout and warm—
 His sole advice is “ *Frieze* ! ”

V.

I missed him from the shop one morn,
 His foreman, Peter Blount,
 Informed me that his chief had gone
 But now to his account !
 I could not *bear* to think him *dead*,
 So sudden was the blow !
 “ O Foley—Foley-lost,” I said,
 But Blount cried “ *Foli—O* ! ”

VI.

Farewell, sweet snip ! If to that word
The letter E you fit,
You see an aggravating bird
That's precious hard to hit !
That bird and Foley each possess
(And this must end my song !)
One point in common—which you'll guess—
Their bills are very long ! ! !

WITH APOLOGIES TO THE SHADE OF TOM
MOORE !

BELIEVE me, if all that roast pork which with zest
I devoured at dinner to-night,
Were to bring indigestion and lie on my chest
Like a log, putting slumber to flight,
It would still be my favourite dish, as of yore,
Let my sufferings be what they will,
And round the crisp crackling and stuffing galore
My thoughts linger lovingly still !

It is not while playing a good knife and fork,
When your frame's undisturbed by a throe,
That the thought of the horrors attendant on pork
Will be likely to fill you with woe.
No ! 'tis only when several *hours* have flown,
That pale Nemesis steals from her lair,
And as on your pillow you fidget and groan,
You feel that "roast pig" is a snare !

A WIFE'S VAGARIES.

(BY A PUZZLED BENEDICT.)

THE tyranny of Minna
 Will wear me to the bone,
 I'm daily growing thinner,
 Last month I lost a stone.—
 A latch-key is forbidden,
 She execrates my club,
 My meerschaums she has hidden,
 And I'm a wretched "Hub!"

Whenever I'm the winner
 Of some substantial bet,
 How mirthful is my Minna!
 How loving she will get!
 She loosens all her tresses,
 And perches on my knee,
 With hints about new dresses,
 And bonnets—don't you see?

But when Fate's unpropitious,
 And I have lost instead,
 Why does my love look vicious,
 And toss her shapely head?
 Why gets she such a pet in?
 Why loathes she so the sin
 And foolishness of betting,
 When *husbands* do not—*win*?

And there's poor Fanny Foster,
 I knew her years ago,

And ventured to accost her
One morning in the Row !
But Minna snubs that maiden,
And votes her pert and coarse
Apart sits ire-laden,
And talks of a "divorce !"

But when with Charlie Spinner
She vals half the night,
And I remind my Minna
"That it is scarcely right !"
Alas ! what sage can tell us
Why Minna takes the huff,
Declaring I am jealous,
And all my fancies "stuff !"

In church the pretty sinner
A perfect saint appears ;
When home again, my Minna
Has often boxed my ears !
In short, she has a will, sir,
Like lovely "Lady Binks,"
But what is stranger still, sir,
I love the little minx !

RECIPE FOR A THREE-VOLUME NOVEL.

TAKE a pound or two of very vapid twaddle,
And season it with slang,
A heroine with nothing in her noddle,
And a hero tall as Chang.

Half a dozen silly "supers" just for *padding*,
 With nothing new to say.
 Throw a mother, too, and rather heavy dad in,
 Who never has his way.

Then take some situations very awful,
 Sprinkle thickly with romance,
 A soupçon, too, of *naughtiness* is lawful,
 And a duel fought in France.

Mix murder, love, and villany to sadden
 Your readers every one ;
 Let the compound simmer freely, *à la* Braddon,
 And lo ! your novel's done !

TO THE COMING COMET !

O STRANGE new Comet ! Meteor rare !
 All minds thou dost absorb ;
 O stranger, shall I call thee fair,
 Or but a vagrant orb ?

When in my snuggerly at ten,
 Thy name salutes my ears,
 I have to throw aside my pen,
 And join the knot of seers !

At first thou seemest rather pale,
 But as it darker grows,
 Thy lengthy and portentous tail
 Most ominously glows !

Avaunt ! and hide thy useless head !
Thou art, although so high,
No *well-bred* meteor—but instead
A *loafer* thro' the sky !

Like him whom in my childish days
I saw ; whose curious mien
Did fill me with a wild amaze—
But now I'm not so green !

To see him blazing, I would stare
All open mouthed, I fear,
Oblivious of the chilly air
And very scanty gear !

But *now* I much suspect thy ends !
A bankrupt orb no doubt !
And minus home, and funds, and friends,
Thou wanderest about !

O Comet strange ! Men all agree
They cannot trust thy *tail* ;
The fittest dwelling-place for thee
Would be in Newgate Gaol !!

FROM THE REGISTRAR-GENERAL.

(IN RE THE CENSUS.)

FRIENDS, countrymen and maids, yield me your years ;
I mean to keep them secret, not to print them.
The fibs that people tell discredit them ;
The truth is seldom found in the "Returns."

So now, to take the Census: some faded charmer
 May hint that she is only thirty-five;
 If she says that, it is a gross perversion
 Of truth, and she will have to answer for 't.
 Here, by the order of my well-loved Queen
 (She is indeed an honourable Queen;
 Oh, were her *subjects honourable* too!)
 Come I to take the ninth Decennial Census.
 It is a task that should be justly done.
 But foolish ladies quibble o'er their ages
 (And they are honourable ladies mind),
 Have made a many captives in their time,
 Whose gifts have helped to swell their charmer's purse.
 Untruth is scarcely seemly here, I think,
 When asked their standing they prevaricate,
 Deception, perhaps, might find a worthier field;
 And yet they coolly amputate their (y)ears,
 And they are honourable ladies mind.

WANTED!—A SINECURE!

I'm versed in Greek and Latin lore,
 An "Artium Magister,"
 My parents look on me with awe;
 I'm worshipped by my sister!

When with that portly Pa of mine,
 In after-dinner session,
 I musing sip his choicest wine,
 And talk of a profession.

I feel it is high time that I
Should cease my folk to burden,
With such a store of sophistry,
Most high should be my guerdon !

I do not feel inclined to shine,
Exposed to musket's rattle ;
The navy isn't in my *line*,
Which aint a *line of battle*.

The law would never do—that's clear,
For briefs the wretches higgie,
'Twould be a *bar* to me, I fear,
At which my dad would giggle !

The thought of medicine makes me *ill*,
A pack of grasping ninnies !
But yet I envy them their skill
In collaring the guineas !

An individual of sense,
Hard work is my aversion.
I ask a decent recompense ;
Without *too* much exertion.

I think it just as well to state
For England's information,
That my capacity is great
For taking recreation !

* * * * *

D d

So silently I sit, and eye
 My parent, half in pity.
 "Eureka, dad!" anon I cry,
 "A Parish in the City!"

ON A VISIT TO MR. PAGE THE BUTCHER.

"PAGE, tell me true, what *cuts* have you?
 Now do not disappoint!"
 "Alas!" he said, and shook his head,
 "The times are out of *joint*!"
 "The *saddle* there is for the *Mayor*!"
 (Thus punningly he spake).
 "That *haunch* must go to Mrs. *Roe*,
 "And *Ridley* wants the *steak*!"
 "Spare ribs!" I cried—"None," he replied,
 "To *spare*!" Said I, in heat,
 "*Brisk it* must be, your trade, friend P.!"
 Quoth Page, "'Tis only *meet*!"
 I *boned* a *shin*—away did spin!
 He followed, shouting "Thief!"
Beef collar's rare, but folk declare
 I should not *collar beef*!

ZOEDONE!

CLARISSA, my sweet little cousin,
 Has quite her own way with the men;
 She smokes cigarettes by the dozen,
 And perhaps a *cheroot*—now and then!

In a race after Reynard, this lassie
Is certainly never the last :
She *once* "wiped the eye" of Bob Massey,
So I must allow she is "fast !"

Alone in the study one morning,
I heard a brisk tap at the door ;
I thought it was James to give warning,
(I'd slanged him the evening before !)
When in popped that saucy Clarissa,
Her eyes fairly dancing with fun,
I couldn't help trying to kiss her,
But found that was not to be done !

"Here, Fred !" cried that rapid young maiden,
"You said you'd be thirsty by noon,
And so with champagne I come laden—
I have not come hither to *spoon* !"
I glanced at this Hebe—far sweeter
Than she who filled flagons on high ;
'Twas noon by my trusty repeater,
And I *was* assuredly *dry*.

Her fingers, the bottle entwining,
Removed that tin-foil we all know ;
A pop, and the nectar was shining
Like gold, in the goblet below !
One moment maybe did I tarry,
Then downwards the fluid had flown,
I gasped, and stared hard at Miss Clarry,
Who laughingly cried "Zoedone !"

"For shame so to hoax a relation,"
 I said, "O fair cousin of mine !"
 But still it is *some* consolation
 To know that the liquor's divine.
 It vastly resembles 'White Satin,'¹
 I think, in its sparkle and glow ;"—
 A stolen kiss *here* came most pat in
 To show I forgave her, you know !

* * * * *

My uncle has since stocked his cellar
 With Zoedone, spite of the sneer
 Of my aunt's sporting brothers, who tell her
 'Twill poison them all in a year.
 And whenever I watch its beads winking
 From oceans of amber, I swear
 I find myself dreamily thinking
 Of *somebody's* sunlitten hair.

TO MY WIFE.

(AFTER THE "PRINCESS.")

Ask me no more ; a man may draw a blank ;
 The cloud may soon descend, and take the shape
 Of horrid writ which he cannot escape ;
 O fond one, gone my balance at the bank !
 Ask me no more

¹ Champagne.

Ask me no more ; whence *is* the cash to come ?
I love not holland plain or faded gear ;
Yet, O my wife, new frippery is dear !
Ask me no more, you darling little hum ;
 Ask me no more.

Ask me no more—I cannot spare a cent ;
The fates of late have been against your hub.
Let the swift hansom whirl me to the club !
No more, my pet, lest haply I relent ;
 Ask me no more.

CHRISTMAS BILLS.

(NOT BY C—P—BELL.)

AT Christmas, when they made a row,
All round him lay the bills I vow,
And black as thunder was the brow
 Of Wiggings growling audibly !

He shook his fists with anger glaring,
Then hurried up and down despairing,
And words we only use when *swearing*,
 Poured from his lips unceasingly.

But higher yet that pile shall grow,
Of unpaid Bills that rile him so,
And faster yet the oaths shall flow
 From his impetuosity !

CHRISTMAS VERSICLES.

(BY A LUNATIC.)

THE weather's as hot as can be,
The sun dances jigs in the sky,
The moon's singing "fiddle-de-dee,"
And the mistletoe's baked in a pie.

Fat turkeys have sent in their "bills,"
I never will eat, and that's flat—
A goose stuffed with gooseberry pills,
If the holly will sit on my hat.

The dog grumbles much at the heat,
And gobbles up ices like mad,
Whilst the Christmas cards walk up the street,
Declaring the mince pies are bad.

The pony for sausages calls,
And wags her ridiculous tail;
Red currants hang up on the walls,
And the monkey is muddled with ale.

I know I was forty next June,
And my grandfather's just twenty-one,
When my father died up in the moon,
My mother she married the sun.

To-night very jolly I feel,
The gout has laid hold of my nose,
I've a headache, I think in my heel,
And a very bad cold in my toes!

I'm writing all this on my head,
Whilst the housemaid is fanning my heels,
The crackers have all gone to bed,
Complaining of too many meals.

The Postman is ringing the chimes,
The Sweep is uncorking the wine,
The terrier's reading the *Times*,
And the cat's singing carols divine.

The pudding has gone for a stroll,
The mince pies are taking a nap,
Old roast beef, that excellent soul,
Declares he'll eat nothing but pap.

"Father Christmas" is snoring so much,
I can't hear the grasshopper speak,
And the pony has borrowed my crutch,
Declaring her ankles are weak.

Oh give me my gruel, love, quick,
And put in the vinegar too !
Then hand me my chocolate stick,
For I mean to go walk in the Zoo.

Colney Hatch, *Dec. 25th.*

THE SONG OF THE FLIRT !

WITH fingers taper and white,
With eyes that looked up at a man,
A lady sat in her ball-room dress,
Twirling her elegant fan.

False ! false ! false !

Though a loving heart be hurt,
And so, in the intervals of the valse,
I sing this "Song of the Flirt."

Flirt ! flirt ! flirt !

Whilst she swims around the room,
And flirt ! flirt ! flirt !

In the alcove's pleasant gloom.
It's oh ! to be a girl

Who slaves for her scanty pay,
Whose heart is true to some vulgar churl,
If *this* is a *lady's* way.

Flirt ! flirt ! flirt !

Till the night is emerged in morn,
Flirt ! flirt ! flirt !

Till the frame is faint and worn.
Smile and whisper and glance,
Glance and whisper and smile,
Till her part is played, and she leaves the dance,
To dream, we hope, of her guile.

(*Society.*)

YOUNG OXFORD'S PRANKS.

(AFTER HOOD.)

'Twas on a dreary night in March,
The hour just half-past nine,
And twenty undergraduates
Rose heated from their wine—
There were some that ran, but none could walk
The nautical chalked line !

HUMOROUS POEMS, AND PARODIES. 409

Away they sped, on larks intent,
With brains inflamed by port,
To an Æsthete's rooms they came, and there
They played the deuce—in short !
Mockingly gleamed their wicked eyes
Above the wreck they wrought !

Like men possessed they rushed about,
And chuckled as they ran ;
Smashing the glass to smithereens,
As only Athletes can !
But the Æsthete crouched behind the screen,
A melancholy man !

His cheek was pale, against his ribs
His heart beat pit-a-pat,
For a burning shame it was, he felt,
To play such pranks as that !
As he peeped through a hole in the screen, and saw
The havoc they were at !

His peacock's plumes they calmly stowed
Away beneath the bed.
With a sinking soul he saw them next
His sacred sunflower shred !—
Much drivel had made him quite “ too-too ; ”—
An Æsthete thoroughbred !

At last they closed the ponderous door
With a loud and savage bang,
He quickly shot the massive bolts,
With a sharp resounding clang—

“ Oh, could I thus so close my mind,”
He sighed—“ to bitterest pang

The Æsthete took a hasty nip,
As smit with qualms inside,
Six tiny sips of eau de vie,
Then made a single stride ;
And down he sat amid the wreck,
And bitterly he cried !

That very night ere gentle sleep
Young Oxford's eyelids kiss'd,
Two stern-faced Dons sat down to wade
Through a certain tell-tale list—
And when that Æsthete walked abroad,
He was most roundly hiss'd !

(*Society.*)

BRIGHTON !

ALTHOUGH I always shunned a “ Bee,”
Where Webster bore the bell ;
Yet I have travelled to the sea—
I own it—for a *spell* !

The cab that brought me from the train
Was followed by a man—
Impelled by sordid dreams of gain,
Right gallantly he ran.

He lost his wind in crooked ways,
The pace was so intense ;
But was resolved *the wind to raise*
Again—at *my* expense !

Against all pleasuring, the Clerk
His sullen face has set,
And we who came here for a lark,
Are dosed with “ Heavy wet.”

At “ Doughty’s Dogs,” whose fame is blazed
Through Brighton far and near,
We only for a moment gazed,
When strolling by the Pier.

Those clever poodles, black and white,
Of which ten thousand talk !
And oh, it was a charming sight
To see them *walk the chalk* !

The grand Aquarium we have done—
(What wonders it reveals !)
We quailed before that potent one,
The Keeper of the Seals !

First in the buffet we remained
To lunch—then did “ the grot,”
For though my *tankard* soon was drained,
The tank(h)ard by was not.

Teetotal whims are not for me !
In Brighton, by the mass,
I little thought that I should see
The tanks so full of *Bass* !

Across one fish I failed to come,

I did not mark its face—

Oh can this fine Aquarium

Be really out of *plaise* ?

The *Fancy Fair* is in full blow—

No novelty I fear—

For *Fancy Fares*, as cabmen know,

Are very common here.

Here valor's sons their war-paint don,

And martial zeal's displayed ;

For every day we look upon

A grand *Marine parade*.

The shops their glitt'ring wares display,

They make a splendid show,

And yet I really cannot say

Their goods are *priceless*,—*No !*

Then there is Mutton's—" classic name,"

Where you "en prince" may sup ;

His steaks are prime, yet all the same,

Brightonians *cut them up*.

If drainage be at fault at all,

The remedy is plain,

For every pipe should have a fall—

Like divers—in the main.

And now my humble song is o'er,

I'll call for "three times three,"

And drain a bumper brimming o'er

To "London by the Sea."

KING THEEBAW.

(AFTER A BAB BALLAD.)

OF all the Kings alive or dead,
 That ever walked on *terra firma*,
 None ere brought matters *to a head*,
 As soon as Theebaw, King of Burmah.
 His grandmama was fond of rum,
 And by the hogshead would she buy it!
 Her loving grandson muttered "Hum"—
 "A *dose of steel* may cure her—try it!"
 "I won't *mince matters* now!" said he,
 Quite gaily to his fifty nieces;
 And then most inconsistently
 He cut them up in *little pieces*!
 "A common lot, with scanty wits!"
 He sneered when censured for his actions,
 And when they brought him in the *bits*,
 He vowed he hated *Vulgar Fractions*!"
 He skinned his dad—he choked his ma,
 He married girls, and *axed* them after—
 To all remonstrances said "Baa!"
 And nearly split his sides with laughter.
 "The fun is *capital*!" he roared;
 "For by a *head* they're all grown shorter!"
 And then swore roundly like a lord,
 Whilst waiting for a pint of porter!

(Society.)

THE LAWN TENNIS MATCH.

(AFTER HOHENLINDEN.)

THE summer day proved all too short,
But night forbade the pleasant sport,
And silent lay the tennis court,
Where time had flown so rapidly.

But morning saw another sight,
When, after slumbers soft and light,
Two girls once more rushed forth to fight
Upon the level greenery.

On either side the net they stand,
Each with her tennis-bat in hand,
The fairest maidens in the land,
Opposed in bloodless rivalry!

There, "faults" no longer were forgiven,
Then, o'er the net the balls were driven,
And, like the deadly bolts of Heaven,
The "serves" in their velocity!

But faster yet the balls shall fly
Beneath the cloudless summer sky,
And still more frequent be the cry
Of "Deuce" that sounds so naughtily!

'Tis noon, but still resounds the blow,
Though scorching hours come and go,
Those maidens, fleeter than the roe,
Are ever darting rapidly!

The combat deepens, Grace will win
 In Jersey fitting like her skin,
 Just give the ball a subtle spin,
 And snatch from Maud the victory !

A few games more, and Grace *has* won !
 " Ho ! Claret Cup ! We both are done !"
 And from the fury of the sun
 They scamper most bewitchingly !

OTHELLO.

(A RHYMED VERSION, À LA INGOLDSBY.)

IAGO was riled with the valiant Othello
 His master, who was a *Moor* outspoken fellow ;
 He knows very well that Othello has angled
 For the fair Desdemona, whose heart is entangled
 In the meshes of Love, notwithstanding his features,
 Being as black as those odious ' African creatures ' !
 Fair D. was the portly Brabantio's daughter,
 A Senator stern, who hung out in that quarter,
 Othello was hated for courting this lassie O,
 And more for his palpable *penchant* for Cassio,
 Whom O. made his " Boss " of those warriors doughty
 Who fought for fair Venice until they got gouty !
 So, honest Iago who got the cold shoulder
 Vows secret revenge ere he's many days older !
 Then by night he strolls up to Brabantio's dwelling,
 And wakens that worthy by dint of much yelling,

When he tells him the Moor has become the new owner
 Of his beautiful daughter—the young Desdemona !
 Brabantio off to the Council skedaddled,
 (With the few wits he had most decidedly addled),
 Where he swears that “black arts” had been used by the
 nigger,

Who cut, he averred, a contemptible figure !
 But his daughter popped in and embracing her darling,
 Left her precious papa very audibly snarling !
 Then the pair sped to Cyprus, it being the Moor’s duty
 To prevent it becoming the Musselman’s booty.
 But hearing the enemy’s fleet had been shattered
 By the winds, they all frolicked, and feasted, and
 chattered !

Then Iago made Cassio drunk as a lord, sir,
 When Othello is summoned and calls for his sword, sir !
 You all know the rest—how the lady’s tongue rattled !
 In the victim’s behalf how she gallantly battled !
 How the Moor became jealous, and savagely cruel,
 Whilst the “Ancient” kept adding fresh coal to the fuel !
 How he made his wife steal—(that poor feminine hack) !
 The handkerchief given sweet Des—by the black,
 And drop it adroitly in Cassio’s way,
 When of course there was really the D—v—I to pay !—
 For the Moor felt convinced ’twas bestowed by his lady
 Who never had dreamt of an action so shady !
 How he smothered his spouse ’twixt the sheets in a fury,
 And then “fixed” himself for a Coroner’s Jury !

(*Society.*)

HUMOROUS POEMS AND PARODIES. 417

ST. SWITHIN. (JULY 15TH, 1882.)

(ON THE VERY WET SEASON !)

FROM the ancient Clerk who controls the weather,
Our close-fisted fogies may take a hint,
Their fossilized hearts are as hard as leather,
They button their pockets—these men of flint.
But the grim old fellow who lives up yonder,
May read them a lesson that's very plain !
His silvery stores he's inclined to squander,
And comes down handsomely—though in *rain* !

The hues are washed from the sodden flowers,
The wind is wailing—its breath is chill—
(Oh *where* are the “dreamy Summer Bowers”
Where the roses twine at their own sweet will ?)
The clouds are dark as in dead Decembers—
A falling glass, and a leaden sky,
As here I muse o'er the dying embers
Of my study fire in “bright July !”

The tennis court has been long deserted,
No tread is heard on the garden grass—
Where Willy whispered and Flora flirted,
Is now a desolate dank morass !
We cannot fish in the flooded river—
We cannot wade through the muddy lanes,
So over the fire we shake and shiver,
And look aghast at the streaming panes !

E e

O Saint, if in you is any pity !
 O Clerk, if mercy is not yet dead
 Do smile a little on lane and city,
 Ere Summer's season has fairly fled !
 Let Phœbus send us his shafts of gladness,
 And dry those tears that are falling yet !
 Just now we are wretched, and sunk in sadness,
 Completely muddled with "*heavy wet* ! "

BEWITCHING BRIGHTON.

I CAME here with laryngeal catarrh,
 And pharyngeal irritation, (that's no hum !)
 Inflammation in my ear was spreading far,
 And threatened perforation of the drum !
 The tube they call " eustachian " was wrong ;
 (Flaccidity it never should possess !)
 I really thought I couldn't linger long,
 My organs were in such a horrid mess.
 But thanks to Doctor Brighton,
 And Doctor Bolus too,
 My woes already lighten,
 I feel as good as new !

It is a pleasant place, beyond a doubt,
 Where the little god is handy with his dart ;
 So many fairy figures flit about,
 I do not feel quite easy in my heart !

The policemen find immunity from crime ;
They have nobody to "take up," I'm afraid,
So they turn to "taking up " their leisure time
By strolling to and fro on the Parade !
And if the sun shines anywhere,
'Tis very clear to me
He's sure to gild this city fair—
This "London-by-the-Sea !"

THE GASTRONOMIC EPOCH.

OCTOBER reigns, in russet raiment dight—
That mellow month ! an epicure's delight—
Its beakers brimming with a brew that's bright
And heady !

Then is that classic biped at its best,
Who woke a city from its midnight's rest ;
Then for slim slices from its tender breast
We're ready !

November greets us wreathed with mist or rime ;
Now is the burly bullock at its prime !
The slaves of soup, they have a pleasant time
When feeding !

Now Southdown saddles, that can never pall,
Melt in the mouths of merry diners all ;
And the young turkey struts, his coming fall
Unheeding.

Now for the herring we a corner keep—
That shapely silvery tenant of the deep !
And if you catch the crafty carp asleep,
Why—dress him !

They all proclaim the bluff old fellow's near,
With holly crowned and full of ample cheer ;
The bottle passes with the passing year—
God bless him !

(The World.)

THE SPOTS OF GREASE !

(WITH APOLOGIES TO THE SHADE OF LORD BYRON.)

THE spots of grease, the spots of grease !
Upon my coat that Poole had built,
Which did not know a single crease—
Whose buttons were of brightest gilt !
The bloom of youth still lingers there,
And all, except those spots, is fair !

The looking-glass it stares at me,
And I stare at the looking-glass,
For there those horrid stains I see
Which Mary dropped—that stupid lass !
And standing there with head askew,
I could not deem the coat was new !

HUMOROUS POEMS, AND PARODIES. 421

'Tis something in the dearth of *Dames*,
Though linked to *handmaids* crass and dense,
To call this careless Mary names,
And rate her for her lack of sense !
For what is left the wearer here ?
For crease a sigh—for grease a tear !

Must we but *weep* o'er ruined vest ?
Must we but *sigh* ? Our fathers *swore*—
Earth ! render back from out thy breast
A remnant of the maids of yore !
Of vanished millions grant me one
Who would not let the tallow run !

You have the nasty benzine yet—
Where are the salts of lemon gone ?
Of two such needfuls, why forget
The stronger, and the likelier one ?
You have the drugs your master gave—
Think ye, ye are to *drink* them, slave ?

Place me alone with Mary—Muse !
Where nothing save the wall and she
May hear the language that I use.
Then, hare-like, let her turn and flee !
Such stupid slaveys work me woe,
Her wages she shall get, and—go !
(*Travel and Talk.*)

"NUMBER 50!"

A MYSTERY in these modern days
That baffles all is rare!
Who is the mystic one that pays
For 50, Berkeley-square?

That gloomy pile is grim and gaunt,
It seems to say "Beware!"
Whose restless spirit loves to haunt
The house in Berkeley-square

The cobwebs in the windows lie,
And dirt and dust are there;
What is the unknown history
Of 50, Berkeley-square?

In the rich London of to-day,
'Tis strange beyond compare
That ghouls and ghosts should have their way
At 50, Berkeley-square!

The time seems ripe; some clever head
Should the solution *dare*
Of that dim secret, deep and dread
At 50, Berkeley-square!

MARCH MUSINGS.

ALL things should go ahead in March,
That much is clear, we know ;
The bonny blackthorn, elm, and larch,
Should all begin to blow.
But frosts have nipped the budding bough
And we in England find
The only thing that blows just now
Is this confounded wind !

The "black North-Easter," praised by one
Who bowed to it at length,
It roars through heavens dark and dun,
Rejoicing in its strength,
It lifts the beaver from the crown,
And whirls it on through space,
It topples stacks of chimneys down,
And scarifies your face !

It brings bronchitis in its train,
And turns our noses blue,
Neuralgia is a horrid pain,
But that it brings us too !
Its onslaught makes our eyelids red,
And shrivels up our skins,
A malison upon thy head,
North-Easter, for thy sins !

"March Hares" are mad—we don't know why--
So they may love thy pranks,

But to thy chill advances, I
 Reply, " Declined with thanks !"
 And so, whene'er abroad I stir,
 Whilst thou dost roam the skies,
 I swathe my fragile form in fur,
 And muffle to the eyes.

CANINE SAGACITY !

THE dog whose foot was wounded sore,
 At length the hospital did win,
 When, limping slowly to the door,
 He whined until they let him in !
 The porter in amazement saw
 Our friend, who squatted on the mat
 And then held up his crippled paw,
 As saying " I have come for that !"
 The kindly fellow fetched the man
 Of lint and lancets with a will,
 Who with all tenderness began
 To dress the limb with care and skill !
 The " patient " licked the clever hand,
 Then loudly barked, as though to say
 " *That* is my fee, you understand,
 And *bark*, I know, is in your way !"
 The surgeon, it must be confessed
 But little for his goodness gains
 A wounded limb he kindly dressed,
 And got a *licking* for his pains !

REVOLUTIONIZING TIME.

OH ! "Argus," what is this you say,
You gave my nerves a shock !
What "Conference " would dare to play
"Old Harry " with the clock ?

When Mrs Grundy asks the time,
She'll think I mean to mock,
If I reply " By yonder chime
Just twenty-one o'clock ! "

When folks who have to go by train,
To Queen's-road Station flock,
This notice will confound their brain,
—" Leaves fourteen five o'clock ! "

Then, all the watchmakers you see,
Who have an ample stock,
Will soon be on " the Rates," if we
Thus trifle with the clock !

The men who have decreed the change,
Deserve, I think, the block !
For " Tea and Scandal " will be strange
At Seventeen o'clock !!

I cling to matters as they are,
As firmly as a rock,
Nor *will* I smoke my last cigar
At twenty-four o'clock !

IN THE FLORAL HALL AT DEVONSHIRE
PARK.

A LOT of ladies sitting there, some reading and some
 knitting there,
 And some are making havoc with their eyes—
 The music through us thrilling, makes each swift glance
 more killing,
 And then their very tender low replies !

See yonder lissom lady ! a rarer fairer Haidee !
 That valse is waking dreams of long ago—
 'Tis sweet to see her listen—her blue eyes softly
 glisten,
 And love is lightly mirrored in their glow !

And there's a musing maiden, whose ample lap is laden
 With Mudie's latest "marvels," as you see,
 No picture could be sweeter, your "*reading girl*" won't
 beat her,
 But then the lassie *will* not look at *me* !

Another little charmer has surely pierced my armour,
 And sent a winged arrow to my heart !
 A trim hat lightly presses her soft luxuriant tresses,
 A sailor hat that's dangerously smart !

She looketh like a "Mabel," and ought to have a label
 Of "*Dangerous* !" appended to her dress,
 For though I'm over forty, this winsome, laughing,
 naughty
 Little witch has winged me neatly, I confess !

HUMOROUS POEMS, AND PARODIES. 427

Here many a dimpled daughter, with eyes agog for
slaughter,
Is nestling by her buxom mother's side.
Here's many a portly father, who hates these concerts,
rather,
And couldn't stand Beethoven if he tried !
A brace of beauties knitting ! their dark orbs slyly flitting
Now and then towards a little knot of men.
Their beaux will find them later, in spite of watchful
pater,
And won't the bonny belles be happy *then* ?
Well ! Strauss *is* most delicious, and women are capri-
cious,
But still they are the sweetest things in life !
A bachelor's a selfish churl, and sadly needs some lively
girl,
To rub him up, and rule, him, as his wife !

NURSERY RHYME—NEW VERSION.

SING a song of scaffolds ! a pocket full of twine !
Sixty applications to "enlist men in the line !"
When old M. had departed the names came pouring in,—
Isn't that a pretty way to earn a lot of tin ?
Marwood's in the churchyard, as dead as any mummy ;
The Queen she wants a hangman, which sounds a little
rummy !
The tender-hearted maiden says "hanging's out of date !"
When down comes a black cap upon the judge's pate !

THE SERPENT OF THE SEA.

WE were dumbfounded, that you may depend,
Here was October drawing to an end
And still no tidings of our ancient friend,
The Serpent of the Sea !

The marvel-mongers couldn't make it out,
And at his tardiness began to pout.
Whatever could the monster be about ?
Wherever could he be ?

He was so punctual in former years !—
Full long we halted between hopes and fears,
A few admirers shed some secret tears
At this so strange delay !

We felt that some important business must
Have kept him back in whom we blindly trust
Or could he be defunct ? we quickly thrust
That awful thought away !

At last when we have daily watched in vain,
And kept our aching eye-balls on the strain,
They shout " He comes ! " and proudly through
the main
Our hero glides along !

So black and glossy ! There he was, our own !
Half-a-mile long ! our bonny boy had grown !
And at him glances full of pride were thrown
By an admiring throng !

Half-a-mile long ! and very full of go !
Going like the wind ! His fiery eyes aglow !
Whirling aloft the spray like driven snow !
What could we wish for more ?

Yet some there are, to proper pride so dead—
So lost to sense—so addled in the head—
They swear he is no serpent, but instead,
A visionary boar ! (or bore.)

LAWN TENNIS.

THE lawn looks fresh and fair again,
For winter's sway is ended ;
The patter of the summer's rain
With woodland song is blended.
The skies are blue as some one's een,
The earth is gay with flowers,
Our tennis court is fraught with green,
And freshened by the showers !

Sweet Maud away her work does pack,
Kate drops "The Monthly Packet,"
Each dons her jersey in a crack,
And rushes for her racquet !
Whilst Bob and I, who love the sport,
Desert the drained decanter,
Mark out with care the classic court,¹
And fix the "net" instantan !

¹ "Lawn Tennis," or something like it, being known to the ancient Greeks.

How sweet they look, these lissom girls,
 Who give us bloodless battle !
 The wind makes merry with their curls,
 And wafts afar their prattle !
 The doves coo in the copse above,
 Intent on happy wooing—
 Maud's voice is heard, "That's forty, love !
 Why, Kate, what *are* you doing ?"

The western sun is getting low,
 But still we do not tire,
 Kate's eyes that "fetched" me long ago,
 Have all their wonted fire !
 I "served" her *well*, that day, she said,
 But she has served me better ;
 For she has promised to be led
 To church with Cupid's fetter !

A FISHERMAN'S FANCIES !

(IN DECEMBER.)

I.

ALONE in my study I muse,
 (*As I live*, with a touch of the *liver* !)
 These *Duns* bring a fit of the "*blues*,"
 But *not* the *blue duns* of the river !

II.

I can't get a *rise*, for you see,
 "Salmo fario" takes his vacation ;

But my wife gets a *rise* out of *me*,
At *eight*, to my dire vexation !

III.

I can no longer spin in the weir
With "*flights*," for the fishes have *fled*, sir ;
But spin silly sonnets, I fear,
With fine *flights* of fancy, instead, sir !

IV.

My collar and flies long ago
Were filched by my valet, false Fletcher !
There are several *flies* on the "*Row*,"
But none on the *line*—that's no *stretcher* !

V.

The fire brings dreams for a space
Of fishing—the flame is so *ruddy* !
The gaff is stuck into a *plaice*—
A *place*—that's to say—in my study !

VI.

Those watery *reaches* I like
Are out of *my* reach, altogether ;
On *trust*, too, I must take my *pike*,
Till we hap on more temperate weather !

VII.

I long for a *cast* : well, by-and-bye,
They'll perhaps make a *cast* of this Poet !
At least, I've a *cast* in my *eye*,
Says " Bell "—and, of course, she should know it !

VIII.

Next year the big trout I'll beguile
 With some piscatorial crony ;
 The *May-fly's* not due for awhile,
 I *may fly* next month to Mentone !

WHY IS IT ?

(BY A MYSTIFIED ONE.)

I.

WHY is it that I cannot dine
 At nine as in the long ago ?
 Why does an extra glass of wine
 So swiftly to my cranium go ?
 Why is it that those twinges keen
 Assault me nightly in the feet ?
 Why is it that I get the spleen
 Unless I *measure* what I eat ?

II.

Why is it that those roguish girls
 Flit by me with averted eye,
 Who used to coyly shake their curls,
 And ogle me in days gone by ?
 Why is it men, the "fifties" near,
 Regard me as a fitting chum ?
 Why *is* that pretty Rosie Vere—
 Whenever I am with her—*mum* ?

III.

Why is my vest becoming tight
That used to be an easy fit?
Why do I shirk going out at night
And o'er my books prefer to sit?
Why is it, when I mount a hill,
I stop so oft, around to peer?
Why is it that my doctor's bill
Is growing longer year by year?

IV.

Why is it lassies sweet and wee
Confound me with their own papa?
Mount unabashed upon my knee,
Or tug my watch-chain—worse by far?
Why is it that I scan the glass,
And cast keen glances at the sky?
And hug my "Paragon"? Alas!
I hadn't one in days gone by.

V.

Why is it that my *spring* has flown?
I *climb* who used to *vault* a gate!
Why is it that the locks have grown
So thin and grizzled on my pate?
Why is it that all *draughts* I shun,
Except those changeable to gold?—
It *can't* be that my "day" is done,
And I am *really* growing old!

F f

THE DIVIDED SKIRT.

(FROM ETHEL TO LOTTIE.—A.D. 1890.)

WE never thought the craze was wide,
 That fads would fail, and skirts divide—
 For reaching nearly to our toes,
 We often risked a broken nose.
 But, oh ! fair coz, we know it now—
 In spite of many a scowling brow,
 The skirts divide—our forms we show—
 And gone the garb of long ago !

Farewell ! farewell ! We walk with ease
 Our rival beaux between !
 Ah me ! the vanished style, sweet coz,
 And crinoline that might have been !

And still, as in the bygone days,
 We saunter through the slushy ways,
 Where pool and puddle, mud and clay
 Tell their own tale of parish sway !
 Whilst you and I, who cotton yet,
 The ancient *régime* don't regret ;
 In parted skirts we walk with jeers
 Of country rustics in our ears !

Farewell ! farewell ! &c.

A DOLEFUL LAY.

(*Copyright.*)

ALAS ! 'tis drawing near again !
 Plum-puddings in perspective loom ;
 Fat geese and turkeys will be slain,
 And berries bright adorn the room.
 A plague on Christmas ! I would say
 To those who will be picking holes
 In this extremely doleful lay—
 The time is far too full of doles.

That man of letters—he who pops
 A lot of trash into my box ;
 Those dunning missives from the shops,
 And bills of costs from Lawyer Fox.
He cannot boast of Royal descent ;
His rôle is stamping up and down ;
 And yet this notable young gent
 Undoubtedly expects a “ crown.”

The boy who brings the heavy bread,
 The lad who leaves the scraggy loin,
 Smith's idle imp, to mischief wed,
 Will each one clamour for a coin.
 The sweep will be “ all up ” my way,
 To filch a florin—nothing less !
 In fact, 'tis not too much to say,
 The world at large expects largesse.

But graver ills than these beset
 Poor Pater at this time, I trow.

He must consume mince pies—and yet
 Dyspepsia is his direst foe.
 The children, too, must all dine late
 On Christmas Day ; but *is* it kind
 With turkey roast to pile each plate,
 When Turkey rhubarb lies behind ?
 We shall be waited on by “waits,”
 Who calmly murder sacred airs,
 And swagger through my garden gates,
 As though the house and grounds were theirs.
 Then when I’m sick of games of chance,
 And bored to death by Christmas trees,
 “Sir Roger” I shall have to dance,
 Although rheumatic in the knees.
 This Festive Season means to me
 A monstrous pile of heavy bills,
 No end of noise, a doctor’s fee,
 An aching head, and Cockle’s pills.
 Let Christmas come in hail or rain,
 In fog, or wreathed with snowy pall,
 It matters not ; for to be plain,
 I wish it never came at all.

(*Illustrated London News.*)

EMANCIPATION.

SHE dwelt within unyielding stays
 That kept her bolt upright—
 A nymph whose waist won doubtful praise,
 She laced so very tight.

A maiden by a kirtle 'dun,
Half hidden from the eye,
A single skirt—when only *one*
Was worn by low and high !

She burst her bonds at last, and so
With perfect ease can stir !
She wears “ *Divided skirts*,” and, oh !
The difference to her !

SOME DAY !

A NEW VERSION. TO AN EXTORTIONATE TAILOR.

(*With Apologies to Mr. Hugh Conway.*)

I KNOW not when your bill I'll see,
I know not when that bill fell due,
What interest you will charge to me,
Or will you take my I O U ?
It may not be till years have passed,
Till chubby children's locks are grey ;
The tailor trusts us, but at last
His reckoning we must meet some day !
Some day—some day—some day I must meet it,
Snip, I know not when or how,
Snip, I know not when or how ;
Only this—only this—this that once you *did* me—
Only this—I'll do *you* now—I'll do you now—
I'll do you now !

I know not are you far or near—
 Are you at rest? or *cutting* still?
 I know not who is held so *dear*,
 Or who's to pay your "little bill"!

But when it comes, some day—some day—
 These eyes an awful tote may see;
 And don't you wish, my tailor gay,
 That you may get your £ s. d. ?

Some day—some day—some day I must meet it,
 Snip, I know not when or how,
 Snip, I know not when or how,
 Only this—only this—this that once you *did* me—
 Only this—I'll do you now—I'll do you now—
 I'll do you now !

THE DEMON DYSPEPSIA.

A DEMON stands behind my chair,
 And watches what I swallow;
 When rich and savoury the fare,
 Most poignant pangs will follow !
 I taste a tart—that demon digs
 Me in the chest directly,
 As though to say, "Come, stop your rigs
 And eat more circumspectly!"
 A glass of ale, and heartburn's mine;
 Pork leads to torments dire;
 And when on dainty bits I dine,
 I rouse my Master's ire.

But when on mutton roast I feed,
And sip my whisky toddy,
He smiles approvingly—indeed,
He dubs me “wise old body!”
You ask his name,—that is no doubt
A very natural question:
He is the direst demon out—
His name is INDIGESTION!!

OUR MODERN CHILDREN.

Our blasé little folk to-day
Are listless, mute, and moody,
From hoops and tops they turn away,
And sneer at Punch and Judy!
They don't get up till very late,
Are fond of dissipation;
And yet we call them—strange to state—
The rising generation!

Our men in miniature at nine
Are epicures already,
Red currant jelly—ginger wine—
Won't do for Master Freddy!

The Miss of six her dollies leaves
To those who scarce can toddle,
And dreams of future conquests weaves
Within her tiny noddle!

Sedate and grave, beyond their years,
 They yawn o'er "Cinderella!"
 But oft into "The Post" she peers,
 That mite in muslin—Bella!
 The children that we kissed of yore,
 With smiling, rosy faces,
 Are gone—and we to-day deplore,
 Precocious airs and graces!

EHEU! FUGACES, POSTUME! POSTUME!

TIME was I've dropped beneath a shot
 From some tight-rigged alluring craft,
 Whose volley, deftly aimed, I wot,
 Would often rake me fore and aft;
 But now, upon Life's mighty main,
 These pretty cruisers hurry by;
 I hoist my signals all in vain,
 And never get one in reply.
 The reason's plain: That horrid crow,
 Has planted his unsightly feet
 Upon my visage long ago;
 The disenchantment is complete.
 My locks, of yore so crisp and brown,
 Alas! are thickly dashed with grey,
 So, when I meet them in the town,
 The lassies look the other way.
 I'm bowling down the hill at last,
 And pretty rapidly, no doubt

When we the Rubicon have passed
Girls think us subjects for the gout !
So hazel eyes and eyes of blue
No longer dart their shafts at *me* !
Alas ! they've something more to do
Than fascinating " forty-three ! "

TIS THE GRUB THAT MAKES THE BUTTER
FLY.

(OLD ADAGE.)

I.

YE Entomologists, attend—
A wrinkle from me get ;
And painted beauties without end
Will fly into your net !
First to a crowded ballroom speed
(You'll only take the "males"),
And there you'll take—you will indeed—
A batch of "*swallow-tails* ! "

II.

" *White Admirals* " you'll find at sea
Upon some martial junk,
When some severe calamity
Has put them in a funk !
Upon *Red Admirals* you'll light
(They have a ruddy nose !)
When it is far into the night,
And they are full of " goes."

III.

For "*Coppers*" in your pocket dip—
 You'll soon be on the (s)*cent* ;
 They cannot well give you the slip
 Unless they all are spent !
 "*Scarce coppers*" now are seldom seen,
 But some poor Arab youth
 May give you here the tip, I ween,
 For his are scarce forsooth !

IV.

The "*Skippers*" are a roving band,
 The *docks* they most affect,
 And if those plants are near at hand,
 You'll spot them, I expect.
 The "*Comma's*" *found on every leaf*
 (The brightest you can choose),
 And once at Girton, I'll be bound,
 You'll meet a score of "*Blues.*"

V.

The "*Grayling*" haunts the stream, you know,
 And there you'll make a haul ;
 And through your *room* you've but to go,
 To run against the "*Wall*" !
 The "*Heath*" is such a *Common* kind,
 It need not claim your care,
 And "*Painted Ladies*" you will find
 Disporting everywhere !

THE PRECOCIOUS PET.

ANGELICA Amabel Agatha Tate

Was a feminine prodigy just over eight—
A golden-haired, talkative, pert little pet,
Who sneered at the dear little boys that she met.

At five she was practised in coquetry's tricks,
A bonfire made of her dollies at six ;
'Tis said her fond mother once found her, at four,
Making eyes at a veteran beau of threescore.

At seven, well versed in the novels of Gaul,
She danced most divinely at every ball ;
She toyed with her tresses, she flirted her fan,
In a way that went straight to the heart of a man.

"I care not for boys," would Angelica say ;
"But *men* and moustachios are more in my way."
And straightway this fairy fell head over ears
In love with a Captain of Royal Engineers.

This amorous captain—no end of a swell—
Was chained by the charms of the juvenile belle ;
In Kensington gardens they walked up and down ;
The twain were the favourite talk of the town.

He twirled his moustachios, stupendous in size ;
She made the most dexterous play with her eyes,
But scarcely could hang on his arm, I suppose,
Although the witch walked on the tips of her toes.

She hinted at last in her frolicsome way,
That they should be spliced without further delay.
The captain turned pale—stammered, "Aggy, *do* wait ;
I really *can't* marry a maiden of eight."

444 *SKETCHES IN PROSE AND VERSE.*

Angelica tossed her resplendent young head,
And eyeing him stonily, scornfully said—
“So be it ! young man ! You’re the queerest of cards !
I *spurn* you for General Griggs of the Guards !”

A DECEMBER DIRGE.

THE days are growing marvellously short,
So is my temper (if I trust my wife !),
The doctor says tobacco shortens life,
So I am driven to a pipe of—port !

II.

The holly days are on us ! Berries red
Will deck dyspeptic puddings as of yore,
Mince pies will bring us misery once more,
And nightmares brood above each aching head.

III.

Now is the season for those “yellow duns,”
Not those that swarm about the crystal rills,
But those accurst interminable bills ;
You know how each unwelcome missive runs.

IV.

You’ve but to throw the *waits* into the *scale*,
And then our round of torture is complete !
Those imps who murder melodies most sweet,
And make night hideous with unearthly wail !

V.

Then once a year, those "boxes" come, oh dear !
Just once too often for a slender purse.
The only "box" that leaves a lad no worse,
Is one you give him on his dexter ear.

VI.

A dreary time when snow, and fog and rain,
Each in their turn, diversify the days ;
But fill the bowl, and let the yule logs blaze,
We'll drive the "blues" to Jericho again !

THE STATE OF THE THAMES.

(AFTER COLERIDGE.)

THE sun came up in regal might,
Out of his strength flashed he
A dazzling gleam upon a stream,
As foul as foul can be.
The filth was here, the filth was there,
The filth was thick and rank—
It lay in piles, for weary miles,
Along the river's bank.
All in the cloudless August sky,
Beneath a sun of blood,
A wondrous maze of masts is seen
Upon the turbid flood.
Day after day, in growing dread
Of cholera, we shiver,
When we should have a tainted ship
Upon a tainted river.

Water, water, here and there,
 From which our "Boards" would shrink;
 Water in patches here and there,
 Not one drop fit to drink!

The very weeds did rot: alas!
 For Thames, our country's pride!
 Yea, cats were flung, with dogs and dung,
 Into the slimy tide!

About, about, and in and out,
 The lights of steamers shone
 At night, when waters dimly seen
 Beneath the stars, reeked on—

And some, in wrath, assured us all,
 That the filth which plagued us sore,
 Had festered there, to taint the air,
 For nine long months or more!

Till every "reach," with shelving beach,
 Was choked with scum at last;
 We could not safely breathe, no more
 Than in some sewer vast.

* * * * *

Ah, well-a-day! what looks I had
 From "Boards," both old and young,
 When I hinted just, for breach of trust,
 Their "members" should be hung!

THE BURIAL OF THE SEASON.

Nor a "drum" was given, nor dance of note,
From the "course" at fair Goodwood we'd hurried ;
Not a soul here, but uttered farewell, and shot
Out of town, looking jaded and worried.
We bundled off blithely at fall of night,
The cabs with our luggage creaking ;
By the Company's very wretched light,
With the newsboys shrilly squeaking.
No useless collar engirt the pug,
Nor in jacket of cloth we wound him ;
But he lay like a babe in Belinda's hug,
With her dimpled arms around him.
Glad and gay were the words we said,
And we felt not a scrap of sorrow ;
But we silently mused on the days that were dead,
And we hopefully thought of the morrow.
We thought, as we haggled about the fare,
And smoothed down that testy Tiny,
That the amorous "peeler" would tread our square,
And we far away on the briny !
And lightly they'll talk of the "Master" that's gone,
And o'er his own "Hashes" abuse him ;
But little he'll reck, if they let him sail on
In the yacht which was built to amuse him !
But half of our heavy trunks were down,
When the clock struck the hour for departing ;
And we heard the distant discordant groan
Of the engine ready for starting !

Slowly and smoothly we glided out
 Of the station so grim and so gritty;
 We cared not a doit, and we raised not a doubt,
 For we'd left care behind in the "city!"

A CHRISTMAS CANTICLE.

(WITH ASIDES.)

Now dawns the time of universal peace;
 All enmity has fled!
 (What! Bobby, pummeling your little niece!
 Be off at once to bed!)

Now is the time to be serenely glad,
 And bid good-bye to ire!
 (Hie! Jane, confound you! has the jade gone mad?
 There's Freddy in the fire!)

Now for a spell of well-deserved repose
 For my distracted brain!
 (Deuce take the baby! I can *never* doze,
 He's bellowing again!)

How sweet to feel one doesn't owe a sou!
That gives a zest to life!
 (What! "Doveton, Debtor"—*Fifty guineas*, too!
 For robes supplied my wife!)

I rather like a bit of mistletoe,
 When girls are in the way!
 (What! Bella! you will ruin me, you know;
 Cost half-a-crown a spray!)

Come, deck the walls, my little family,
Each other's failings bear !
(Why, John, you scoundrel—*you* a butler ! why
This Port is corked, I swear !)
Now should our purses always open be
To paupers far and near !
(“ Boy wants a ‘ Box ’ ? Then give him one from me,
But *mind*—upon his ear ! ”
I feel at peace with all the world just now,
My heart has grown so large !
(The “ *Waits*,” by all that's horrible ! I vow
I'll give the knaves in charge !)

THE “SILLY SEASON.”

ONCE more our countless scribes unite
To flout both sense and reason,
The wondrous stories they indite
Attest the “Silly Season.”
“ Big Gooseberries ” have had their day,
“ Sea serpents ” cease to thrill us,
So now on other chords they play,
With wonderment to fill us.
The “ Daily Press ” is open still
To every baseless story,
Crass jokers work their horrid will,
And wits (?) are in their glory.

G g

A most good-natured fish is found
 On barnacles to batten,
 So we may keep our good ship sound
 Whilst friendly fishes fatten

The "Innvits" are *invited* in
 (These *Invites* please the nation),
 Just to decline them were a sin ;
 They press for acceptance.

They are amphibious—are they not ?
 Both fish and seals they slaughter !
 With only one undoubted blot—
 Antipathy to water !

"Divergible Balloons" are flung
 At all our heads devoted,
 Electric myths by old and young
 Are credulously noted.

* * * * *

In fine, the season has begun,
 When folly cuts fine capers.
 By whom is all the fooling done ?
 Who hoaxes all the "papers" ?

FEMINA VICTRIX !

(A REMINISCENCE OF LAWN TENNIS.)

My busy thoughts had flowed that day
 In dry and dusty channels,
 At length I flung my books away,
 And jumped into my flannels ;

Against the sunlight soft and clear,
'Twas vain the heart to harden,
And dainty laughter reached my ear
From ladies in the garden !

Sweet Hilda had undoubted "go,"
A perfect rounded figure ;
She hunted, skated, drew the bow,
And even pressed the trigger !
Her "serves" were very swift and strong,
Her "twists" most scientific ;
Few girls could stand before her long,
Her volleys were terrific !

Lenore, her sister, was a girl
As full of dash as Hilda ;
Her eyes, amid the waltz's whirl,
Did luckless men bewilder !
She too was fleeter than the fawn,
Gave "thirty" to her cousins ;
Past mistress of the Tennis Lawn,
Who won her games by dozens !

They settled it, these saucy fays,
The night before at dinner ;
First they should struggle for the Bays,
Then I should play the winner !
Lenore had won—the witch Lenore !
That bonny, blue-eyed rattle ;
And now upon the grassy floor,
She burnt to give me battle !

So flinging doughty Darwin down
 (I left his book half-witted !)
 I hurried off, a clumsy clown,
 Against an angel pitted !
 These women witch us with their dress,
 Their hair, their voice, their glances ;
 And I must candidly confess,
 A lawn their charms enhances !

Then in the waning August day,
 With Umpire like a Venus,
 We buckled stoutly to the fray
 That hotly raged between us ;
 Her quick "returns" I could not stop ;
 Her service was too winning
 I always missed them at the hop,
 Confounded by their "spinning."

"*That's forty*, Love !" exclaimed the fair !
 Those words brought jubilation,
 Foretold a future, when they'd bear
 A new interpretation ;
 "*Love* all !" she cried, but to myself
 I murmured—"Foolish Lenny,
 I'll love but *you*, you pretty elf,
 Nor wish to woo the *many*."

The doves cooed on in depths of green,
 Our Umpire prattled sweetly !
 At length unto my bosom's Queen,
 I had to yield completely ;

But to St. George's in the square,
Anon, our way we wended ;
We had *another* " *Service* " there,
A " *match* " that isn't ended !

THE UNFITNESS OF THE MEAT.

(WITH APOLOGIES TO THE LAUREATE.)

" The Master to the Mistress," *loquitur*.

You—you—if you have failed to comprehend
A Briton's dinner is his all in all,
On you a husband's anger will descend,
If that cold mutton pall
Upon his palate keen.

This meal the cheeriest—sacred hour of bliss !
This one rare meal, the joy of every man ;
Poor Hubby, what would *Life* be, stripped of *this* ?
And what avails the lunch abstention plan,
If *Dinner* brings the spleen ?

You—you—who have the ordering of the meat,
If you can only compass horrid grub,
When husbands starve—the hanson trim and fleet
Shall whirl them to the *Club*—
But *then*, you'll call it mean !

A BOOKISH BALLAD.

(AFTER HOOD.

I HAVE a goodly library, but oft they disappear,
Those cherished volumes which I hold so very—very
dear.

I lost my *Bacon* t'other day—could anything be harder?
My cook had taken it by stealth—I found it in the
Larder!

I've just surveyed my books again, from ceiling to the
floor,
And though my sight is very good, I can't see any
More!

My *Swift* has flown, my *Martin* too—'tis *Autumn*—here's
a shock!

I see that Captain Bolter has *bolted* with my *Lock(e)!*

My *Hope* departed long ago, and now through some
one's wiles

My dingy study has become a stranger to my *Smiles!*

My *Lever* left me long ago, I know not when or how—
I can't build "castles in the air," my *Mason's* missing
now.

And yet, in spite of these mishaps, I have some pleasure
still,

For can I not devour my *Lamb* and *Bullock*, too, at
will?

HUMOROUS POEMS, AND PARODIES. 455

A tit-bit, too, from *Hog(g)* is rare—a slice of *Wolf(e)* not
bad—

And then, when I am *thirsty*—why, I've *Porter* too,
bedad

My *Spencer* has been boned, 'tis true, but they have left
my *Hood*,

Nor have they filched my *Mackintosh*, so I can face a
flood.

At last I've found a *Key* to *Lock(e)*, though it is odd,
no doubt,

That, when I take his meaning *in*, I find his meaning *out* !

I still enjoy my *Crab(be)*'s nice *tales*, and, to my wishes
yielding,

My boy became a cricketer by studying his *Fielding*.

I have the works of *Watts* his name.—I'm colour blind,
'tis said,

For *Black* and *White* and *Brown* with me are very often
re(a)d !

I'm very dutiful, of course, so love my *Mother well*.

My *Hare* and *Hunt* have vanished, too, but *where* I
cannot tell !

I have a *Park* to ramble through—and *this* is *not* a
myth—

Alas ! my *Smith* can *nail* no more, for they have nailed
my *Smith* !

But yet with *Bacon*, *Lamb*, and *Crab(be)*, and perhaps a
bit of *Steel(e)*,

I still can make, whene'er I choose, a *literary meal* !

APPLIED TO HOME RULE.

(AFTER MOORE.)

“ Oh ! call it by some fitter name ! ”

OH ! call it by some fitter name,
Home Rule is far too trite,
 And Erin's now a world aflame,
 Whose wrongs we must requite ;
 And “ *Parliaments* ” are no great boon,
 When members learn to bore,
 Awhile sedate, they'll twaddle soon—
 Oh ! give her something more.

Imagine something nobler far,
 More free from Party hate
 Than talking institutions are,
 Yet loyal to the State ;
 And if this much desired plan
 Your addled head can't frame,
 Go, ask of England's Grand Old Man,
 And you—*won't* learn its name !!

THE BISHOP AND THE BALLET.

(WITH APOLOGIES TO MR. W. S. GILBERT.)

POSTURES antic
 Drove him frantic,
 Seized he pen and paper—

“ Young men, stop it,
“ Pray you, drop it,
Watching damsels caper—
“ ’Gainst this awful,
“ Vain, unlawful
“ Folly set your faces ;
“ Though they charm ye,
“ Girls will harm ye
“ More than wine or races ! ”

They replying,
Answered, sighing—
Hawing, hemming, humming—
“ Not for Joe, sir,
“ For you know, sir,
“ Short skirts are becoming !
“ Ballet dancing,
“ Is entrancing,
“ We enjoy it—*rather* ! ”
But stern “ London ”
Thought them undone—
Spoke out like a father.

“ *Dare* ye dally
With the ballet ? ”
Said the bishop, coldly.
“ *You* may see, sir,
More than *we*, sir,”
Young men answered, boldly.

“ Go along, boys,
 “ You are wrong, boys,
 “ *I* have years in plenty ;
 “ Whilst these lasses,
 “ Through my glasses,
 “ All seem under twenty ! ”

Dancer clever
Hardly ever
 Finds a *man* who'll scold her.
 Leant one fairy,
 Light and airy,
 On his lordship's shoulder ;
 Bishop kissed her
 Like a sister,
 When he *should* have smacked her !
 To delight her,
 Doffed his mitre
 And became an “ *Actor* ” ! !

THE GENERAL NUISANCE.

I've many things to plague me now,
 Especially the weather ;
 Another “ flood ” has come, I vow—
 It rains for days together !
 As if this “ *soak* ” was not enough
 To plunge me in dejection,
 There comes a hardship yet more rough,
 The General Election ! ! !

"I'm an Eclectic," so I tell
"My friends who come to chatter—
"I mean to vote for *some one*—well
"That *some one* doesn't matter !!
"From Divers Creeds the things I choose
"That suit my predilections.—
"And there, in short, you have my views
"On General Elections !

"'In Medio tu' —you know the rest—
"Creeds Liberal, Whig, and Tory.
"They *each* have *something*, *that* is best
"For dear old England's glory !
"But then you *must* identify
"Yourself—(despite selection),
"With *some one*, *if you vote*, they cry—
At this, our Great Election !"

Well, say, I find my views *most* met
By "*Peter's*" "Declaration !"
"For him I vote, though "*Paul*" may get
Returned 'mid acclamation !
Had I *two* votes, I needn't say
That Paul would have the other,
His "notions" *somewhat* tend my way,
But I *prefer* his *brother* !

Of "raving Politics" I'm sick,
But *friends* will pump me daily,
I always wish them at "old Nick"
Or up at "*the Old Bailey* !"

They *say* each man is free to hold
 His favourite opinions !
 And yet at *mine* they scoff and scold—
 These narrow-minded minions !

These " Agents " I'm compelled to snub,
 For they, beyond a question,
 Already threaten—there's the rub !
 To ruin my digestion !
 When deep in lunch I chance to be,
 And Mary with a giggle,
 Says " Certain gents would speak with *me*,"
 In righteous wrath I wriggle !

But worse behind—These "*cards*" are droll !
 On Friday I'm to hurry,
 Away from breakfast to the *Poll*—
 A genuine case of *skurry* !
 And knowing I'm a hapless spark,
 Compelled *post-haste* to foot it.
 They tell me *how* to "make my mark,"
And next which name to put it ! ! !

What have I done, that day by day,
 I'm badgered in this fashion ?
 My hair is quickly turning grey
 Which *should* excite compassion !
 No peace in which to wield the pen !
 No time for snug refectations !
 " The *W(h)igs* should *head the Poll*, my Men !
 Hang General Elections !

NOVEMBER.

A NEUTRAL-TINTED month is this—

A month of mists obscure and grey,
Extinguishing all thoughts of bliss,
And growing darker day by day.

The sun, alas ! is seldom seen,

The devils blue around us swarm,
The air is raw, the blasts are keen,
And *Punch* alone can keep us warm.

Your horsey men are wide awake,

It is the month for choosing *mares* ;
Physicians too a harvest make,
And cabby collars lots of fares.

"'Tis an ill wind"—you know the rest,

So dark November has its use !
Pour moi, the season I detest,
And plead catarrh as my excuse.

The "ayes and noes" *both* have it now,

For both are reddened by the fog,
"Neuralogy" assaults my brow,
I feel, and am, a human log.

Sharp twinges issue from my toe,

For just now "*Chacun a son gout*."
(The sole prescription that I know
Is, hot within and cold without).

At three p.m. my lamp is lit,

The outlook is so drear and dank,
I shake and shiver where I sit,
My whole existence seems a blank.

I peer into the ruddy blaze,
Grate comfort that (excuse my puns !),
 When all the faces I can raise,
 Are those of angry scowling duns.

Wherever did I stow away
 That prussic acid? or instead
 I have a *Colt* who needs no hay,
 Preferring boluses of lead.
 But here's a letter! (To be sure—
 Subscription up a week ago!)
 I'd best renew it, and procure
 Another lease of *LIFE*, you know!

MANDATES FOR MARY!

(AFTER MOORE'S ANACREONTIC
 "Wreaths for the Ministers.")

HASTEN, Mary, Queen of Maids,
 Bring me seltzer from "The Shades"—
 Or (if better there by far)
 From the "Gaiety's" bright "bar,"
 Where each little Masher pale
 Breathes his smoke, and quaffs his ale!
 Hither come and bring some wine
 In that handy tray of thine,
 From those fellows—those who rule us,—
 Charge us well—and, some say, fool us.

First, you must then, willy nilly,
 Fetch me Oscar's vaunted lily ;
 Lily of the purest dye
 Tubbs the florist can supply !
 Choose me out the best, my lass,
 And stick it in my tallest glass—
 Find me next a pillow cosy,
 For I'm feeling rather dozy.
 Smoking cap of brilliant red
 For thy master's aching head
 'Twill console his brows, I wot,
 For the loss of chimney pot !
 Next my slippered ease to crown,
 Bring me, nymph, my dressing-gown ;
 Some " old Irish " which has been
 Brought from Erin's Isle so green.
 And as, Mary, maiden sweet,
 Thy master loves (though most discreet)
 His nightly grog, both hot and sweet,
 Crush the lemons, first of Syrens,
 Crush them with—thy curling irons—
 That will do—away, away—
 Had I *credit* I would say
 Bring me weeds—the choicest brand
 Thou canst purchase in the Strand.
 How thy master's brow should smile,
 Wreathed with baccy smoke the while ;
 But time presses—pray be quick,
 Poke the fire, and—cut thy stick !

TAKING THE CAKE.

THE wedding-cake—the wedding-cake—
 Which pretty girls have loved so long,
 Which cynics deem a huge mistake,
 And poets have enshrined in song.
 Of these rare *morceaux* quite a host
 Have vanished in the *Parcels Post*.

A carrier drove the van, I trow ;
 'Twas crammed with parcels great and small,
 And cakes by hundreds lay below,
 With plums well stuffed, for court and hall.
 He counted them at dawn of day,
 And when the sun set, *where were they?*

And where *are* they? Cut up, I fear !
 Beneath the pillows they are laid,
 Of P.O. girls, who put them here,
 To dream of husbands, I'm afraid !
 And must these cakes, oh ! nymphs divine,
 Pass into naughty hands like thine !

We have the pretty lassie yet,
 Although the wedding cake has gone ;
 Of the two dainties, why regret
 The coarser, more material one?
 We have the winning, winsome jades—
 Think ye they're doomed to be "*old maids*" ?

MY SCHOOLDAYS.

I.

DR. *Swisher*, I recollect well,
When I was as high as the table,
As a *man*, in the main,
He was given to *cane*,—
As a *scholar*—decidedly *able* !

II.

He had just forty pupils in all,
This man of immense erudition !
There were ushers of course,
Who screamed themselves hoarse,
And must have been “ *bored with tuition* ! ”

III.

I remember a *Hare* in the *Form*,
Who frequently got into trouble,
For his comrades made *game*
Of this *Hare* to their shame,
And often compelled him to *double* !

IV.

I rose to “ the fifth in a crack,”
And proved such a dab at my Latin,
That the Doctor, I swear,
Would start up in his *chair*—
No grand one, although it was *Satin* !

H h

V.

Each day we had different *fare*,
But the Fare was indifferent—often !
 • Tough mutton and bread
 That was heavy as lead,
 And suet that nothing could soften !

VI.

The Doctor awoke us at five
 In Winter—the glass being at zero !
 He got a *rise* out
 Of us urchins no doubt,
 Each morning—this terrible Nero !

VII.

I once dared to *wax* on the sly
 The Doctor's own throne—'twas high Treason ;
 But *whacks* did I gain
 From a highly *waxed* cane,
 And I *waxed* very *sore* for a Season !

VIII.

To college they meant me to go
 When my age should be somewhat more mellow,
 They said I should rise
 By *degrees*—and grow wise,
 Till the *chap* was transformed to a *fellow* !

IX.

But a Surgeon I was in the end !
(And I'll *bet* that there isn't a *better* !)
 " Lucky *dog* ! " said young Jim
 When I spliced his poor limb,
 " To have won such renown as a *setter* ! "

THE OLD YEAR AND THE NEW.

COPYRIGHT.

THE loss of friends, you will agree,
 Is what we all deplore ;
But *have* you been a friend to *me*,
 Old Eighteen-eighty-four ?
You swelled my rates, to put it pat,
 Quite high enough before ;
I hardly owe you thanks for *that*,
 Old Eighteen-eighty-four !
You gave me twinges in the knees,
 Ask portly Doctor Gore :
Can I feel gratitude for *these*,
 Old Eighteen-eighty-four !
With gouty twitches I've been cursed,
 Since you came through my door :
My heart with gratitude won't burst,
 Old Eighteen-eighty-four !
Another " Cherub " 'twas your whim
 To add unto my store :
Do you expect my thanks for *him*,
 Old Eighteen-eighty-four ?

A burglar scare—a broken nose—
 A friend who proved a bore :
 Oh ! blessings on your head for those,
 Old Eighteen-eighty-four !
 Dyspepsia now has swelled the ranks
 Of foes who plagued me sore :
You brought him—twenty-thousand thanks,
Dear Eighteen-eighty-four !
 Bad debts galore—long Doctor's bills—
 And countless "mercies" more !
Deep gratitude my bosom thrills,
 Good Eighteen-eighty-four !
 And now we are about to part—
 To part for evermore :
 Good-bye ! Good-bye ! with *all* my heart,
 Old Eighteen-eighty-four !

* * * * *

He's gone ! I somehow feel more bright—
 The gayest man alive !
 Good morning ! *You* will put all right !
 Young Eighteen-eighty-five !

(*Illustrated London News.*)

A SEASONABLE SONG.

COPYRIGHT.

HAD I but an Invisible Cap,
 Like those famed in mythical pages,
 At agents my fingers I'd snap,
 When a battle political rages !

I should don it with merriest mind,
And make of my troubles a clearance ;
For people who sought me would find
That I never put in an appearance !

But now, when I'm busy at lunch,
With the comforts called "creature" around me,
On the gravel I hear a sharp crunch,
And I know they are coming to sound me !
But I'm not to be sounded—not I !
And give them their congé through Mary ;
Return to my raid on the pie,
And comfort myself with canary !

Again, all the friends that I meet
Will pump me about my opinions :
And then they soon get in a heat.
These narrow illogical minions !
I quietly tell them I am
An Eclectic—to settle the matter,
And thus, I cut short, with a cram,
Their ceaseless contemptible chatter !

'Tis rough on a Knight of the Pen,
Who asks but his quantum of quiet,
To be plagued by these horrible men,
And even disturbed at his diet !
For a fit of the blues I am ripe :
These politics spoil my digestion ;
Although, when these lines are in type,
Thank God, they'll have settled the question.

Then Christmas is coming, bedad !
 And duns will soon drop in by dozens !
 Again one must jest and look glad,
 And flirt with one's feminine cousins ;
 Must swallow pies heavy as lead ;
 Must dance, though one's knees are rheumatic ;
 And finally stagger to bed
 (The house being so full) in the attic.
 So, when the elections are done,
 A fresh batch of woes is before me ;
 Enforced, idiotical fun
 And puerile pastimes to bore me.
 One solace remains for me, now—
 One stray crumb of comfort—and this is,
 To kiss, 'neath the mistletoe bough,
 The pick of the prettiest misses !

(*Illustrated London News.*)

A DRINKING SONG (SLIGHTLY ALTERED).

(AFTER MOORE.)

“ Fill the Bumper ne'er.”

FILL the bumper *ne'er*,
 Every drop we sprinkle
 O'er the brow of care,
Brings another wrinkle.
 Wit's electric flame
 Ne'er so *feebly* passes
 As when through the frame
 It *steals* from brimming glasses.

Would'st thou know what first
Made our souls inherit
This *degrading* thirst
For wine's *obnoxious* spirit?
It chanced upon that day
When (*as says my daughter*)
The Devil stole away
Our natural thirst for water!

Some drops *lurk* in that bowl,
Remains of last night's pleasure,
Which quenched the sparks of soul,
Mixed *our wit's scant* treasure.
Sad the goblet's shower,
Hath such spells to win us;
Fell its *baleful* power
O'er that flame within us!

OUR VISITORS!

THEY come from country and from town,
They come from foreign regions—
And to this health resort run down
Not singly, but in legions!

They chatter gaily at the Band
Whilst hearing sharps and trebles.
They babble on the shining sand,
And pick up pretty pebbles.

They stroll till dark about the Park,
 Their dresses charm the eye, Sir,
 Whilst here and there a "belle" you mark,
 And here and there a "*Guy*," Sir!

And here and there some spoony gent
 His charmer's figure presses,
 With many a silvery ornament!
 About her golden tresses!

In one unbroken stream they flow,
 To watch the Tennis matches,
 Some vote them fun, and others slow—
 But still they come in batches!

They steal my choicest joint of meat,
 All vainly do I seek them—
 I cannot get my tit-bits sweet—
 The *Visitors* bespeak them!

They skip, they slide, they walk, they ride,
 They make most ugly rushes—
 Across my tender corns they stride,
 My days are passed in *crushes*!

They murmur greatly I'm afraid
 At Eastbourne's awful prices,
 They linger on the Esplanade,
 And loiter o'er their ices.

I'm badgered terribly, I trow,
 And shall I stand it?—never!
 The Seasons come—the seasons go—
 Yet Eastbourne's full as ever!

MY WHITELEY!

(WITH APOLOGIES TO THE SHADE OF MISS ANN
TAYLOR.)

Who made me a resplendent vest,
With dandy buttons of the best,
And on my head a topper prest?
My Whiteley.

When sleep came not at any price,
Who was it mixed me something nice—
A draught which “did it” in a trice?
My Whiteley.

When partial baldness vexed me sore,
Who said he’d bring my locks once more,
And showed me *lotions* by the score?
My Whiteley.

Who dressed my wife in clothes so gay,
And taught me *money down* to pay,
In such a *very* civil way?
My Whiteley.

Who first *procured* that wife for me,
And said, when I preferred my plea,
“Miss *S.* will suit you to a *T.*?”
My Whiteley.

And can I ever cease to pray
For thee, my guide, my friend, my stay,
Who put my Maggie in my way?
My Whiteley.

Ah no ! and what is more, I swear,
 When to *The Grove* I next repair,
 I'll spend each sixpence I can spare,
With Whiteley.

When thou dost choose to cut "the shop,"
 A pot of gold will be thy prop,
 All joys be thine—a blessed crop !
My Whiteley.

Fell vengeance from the skies will rain
 If knaves who envy thee thy gain
 Should try to burn thee out again,
Good Whiteley.

"YE PRIMROSE DAMES OF ENGLAND."

(AFTER CAMPBELL).

YE Primrose Dames of England
 Who serve the "cause" so well,
 Whose pluck has braved a thousand jeers,
 And Rad's derisive yell !
 Your blandishments prepare anew
 With serious intent,
 And wile with sweet guile
 All the parsons of Dissent ;
 With broidered slippers deftly aimed
 At the Parsons of Dissent.
 The spirits of your mothers
 Shall labour at your side,
 For "the Cause" it was *their* pride as well,
 And Beaconsfield their guide.

Where *men* uncouth and clumsy fail,
Your efforts shall be spent
As you wile with sweet guile,
All the Parsons of Dissent ;
With broidered slippers deftly aimed
At the Parsons of Dissent !

These Parsons want no "agents,"
No *males* their votes would gain ;
You'll march triumphant to the poll,
And lead them in your train !
Beneath the magic of your eyes
The sternest will relent,
As you wile with sweet guile,
All the Parsons of Dissent ;
With broidered braces deftly aimed
At the Parsons of Dissent !

The Primrose Dames of England
Inglorious ease shall spurn,
Till Gladstone and his dupes depart,
And the Tories shall return.
Then, then, ye dainty temptresses,
Our joyful strains shall run
To the fame of your name,
With Dissenting Clerics won !
When the Liberals' shouts are heard no more,
And Dissenting Clerics won !

THE GRAND YOUNG MAN.

THE "Grand Young Man" on the "stump" has gone
 In the Rads' front rank you'll find him ;
 The spoiler's axe he has girded on,
 And his Programme slung behind him.
 "Working man," said the "people's Joe,"
 " 'Though Tories all neglect thee,
One trump, at least, thy 'rights' shall blow,
One faithful arm protect thee."

The "party" fell, but the Tories' reign
 Could not bring the bold boy under ;
 The "tongue" he loved was loosed again,
 In threats of "blood and thunder,"
 And said, "No man shall bully *me*,
 The soul of truth and bravery ;
 My voice shall sound till the land is free,
 And never be gagged by knavery."

(*Society.*)

THE MIDNIGHT MISSION.

(A LEGEND OF THE WEST COUNTRY ! OKEHAMPTON,
 DARTMOOR.)

THE Mansion of Fitzford, so hoary and grey,
 Was a very remarkable house in its day
 For here dwelt a lady whose conduct was shady,
 Who, I blush to remark, just by way of a lark,
 With three loving husbands by stealth made away !

HUMOROUS POEMS, AND PARODIES. 477

Sir John was her daddy, and "Fitz" was his name,
Of a very old breed he assuredly came,
But when he went off from a troublesome cough,
His daughter—sole heiress—though people cried
"Shame,"

Performed a new dance just imported from France—
A queer "*pas de seul*" that shocked every glance—

To show, as she said, now her daddy was dead,
She just meant "to *go it*" and "*go it*" she did
For by way of beginning, she promptly got rid
Of all who were *staid*, each man and each maid;
While those who drank toddy, liked beer with a
body,

Whose conduct was vile, and whose manners were
"*shoddy*,"

Were kept to amuse this most dissolute jade.

They drank and they smoked, they flirted and
joked,

They bussed all the lassies, they jingled their
glasses,

Played unlimited "*Loo*," and were great at a "*Do*."

They feasted and swore, and so loud did they roar,
That their laughter was heard half a mile off, and
more!

But I grieve to relate, that so sad was their state,
Every night about ten, all the ladies and men,
By hirelings lewd (whose remarks were *most* rude),
Were carried to bed *most decidedly* screwed!

And now a whim entered the Lady Ann's head,
Which was a decided desire to wed

Some neighbouring baron, who soon would be led
 By the nose ; who would live in perpetual dread
 Of his spouse, and enrich her when he should be
 dead—

So she pitched on a swain she thought likely to suit,
 Who had a large fortune—and castles to boot—
 Was meek in his manner—and played on the flute—
 Was very submissive, and loathed a dispute—

Sir Guy was his name—and from Cornwall he came
 (His wife had just died—a most worthy old dame)

With her ogles, smart dresses, and tender caresses ;
 Her smiles and her wiles, this most meek of old
 “ files ”

Was very soon landed, and found he'd a wife
 Before he had actually time to say “ knife ! ”
 They were rolling in riches, but soon Lady Ann
 Discovered she'd married, alas ! the wrong man !
 For though he was old, and had plenty of gold, .
 He had, if the stern, naked truth must be told,
 An objection to noise, and to gin hot or cold.
 So he bid his young spouse never more to carouse
 With her friends in the hall—vetoed banquet and ball.
 She was *not* to sit up till the hours were small,
 But to give them the sack, each Jill and each Jack,
 And change her sad habits now, once and for all.
 The Lady Ann pouted her pretty red lip,
 Then took of cold cognac a *pretty* long sip,
 As she racked her poor wits how to give him the slip,
 When her fair *femme de chambre* slyly gave her the
 tip—

"If master's a bore"—here she points to the floor—

"Why, just put him down *there*—not to rise any more!

If I had *my* way with the crabbed old fellar
I'd stick him, and stow him away in the cellar."

The Lady Ann heard, and she drank in each word.
Of *poison* a grain would soon settle her swain.
Pop it into his port—'twould be merely in sport—
And then his base life would be swiftly cut short.
A fearful resolve! but, though *conscience* soon chid it,
I'm sorry to have to relate that she *did it*!
And that night at eleven—as midnight drew nearer—
Sir Guy lay beneath his own Hock and Madeira!

The Lady Ann then felt disposed to be gay,
But she actually promised to "love and obey"
Another stern baron the *very next day*!
And as *he* proved troublesome, I have heard say,
She "cooked *his* goose," too, in the very same way!
Then she told a big cram, as she told one before
(When she poisoned Sir Guy, that unlucky old bore);
And to all rash inquirers she flippantly swore
That the D—v—l himself had popped up through the
floor,
With his mouth breathing flame and a terrible roar,
Had collared each hubby, then rapidly tore
Through the darkness, and vanished—she didn't know
more!
To have poisoned *two* "hubs" you'd have thought was
enough,
But she doctored a *third* one with similar stuff,

Who took longer dying—the brute was so tough !
 Then married Dick Grenville, a cavalier gruff,
 Who swore mighty oaths, and was partial to snuff,
 Whose valour was great, and whose manners were bluff,
 Who kept her in trim, and delighted to puff
 His pipe in her face, and would give her a cuff,
 Whenever he thought she deserved a rebuff.

One night, as the clock was striking two,
 And the lady snored (even ladies do !)
 When her Dicky was “ up ” and engrossed with Loo,
 She awoke in great fear, for a voice in her ear
 Said, “ My lady, I warn you the end is near,
 Your death will occur in a day and a year,
 And your ghost shall ride in a coach of bones,
 Rattling nightly across the stones,
 From your castle grey to Okehampton Park,
 With a hound attending you through the dark,
 Who, every night, in his mouth shall fetch
 A blade of grass (you abandoned wretch !)
 From the park, until it is stripped as bare
 As your husband’s bald pate, which has never a
 hair !

A just retribution, my lady fair,
 For deeds which a D—v—l would hardly dare.”
 She saw not a soul, but this fearful doom
 She heard pronounced in her own snug room,
 Then all was still as the silent tomb.
 The lady shivered, as well she might,
 And of course didn’t close her poor eyes that
 night ;

But she told not "Sir Dick," as he had a bad trick
Of bidding his charmer to go to old "Nick"
When she prattled in bed—yet she "cut her stick"
In a year from that day—and the rustics say
She is still to be seen on her wild weird way
In a coach of bones, that skims o'er the stones,
Bound in the dark, for Okehampton Park,
Every night, with a bloodhound stark
Running close by, as if out for a lark !
And the stoutest Devonian will prove a sad coward
If he catches a glimpse of the bad Lady Howard !
(*Society.*)

"NOTHING TO TALK ABOUT!"

"NOTHING to talk about!" one day,
A near acquaintance grumbled,
As feebly, in a vacant way,
With golden guard he fumbled.

"Nothing to talk about!" I said,
Exceedingly politely,
"With Jumbo scarce a fortnight dead,
And 'Joey' spouting nightly!"

"'Nothing to talk about!' old man
(The papers—do you read 'em?)
With young Roumelia in the van,
And fighting for her freedom!"

“ ‘ Nothing to talk about ! ’ while he
The Grand Old (Church) Marauder,
Is still alive to fell a tree,
Or pen a card—to order !

“ ‘ Nothing to talk about ! ’ with ‘ Jack,’
That railway dog engaging,
With all our coal trade getting *slack*,
And equinoctials raging !

“ ‘ Nothing to talk about ! ’ good sir,
When huskiness rejoices
In this enthusiastic stir
About ‘ Italian voices ! ’

“ ‘ Nothing to talk about,’ ” I said,
“ With Hertz and his canary ;
With General B-t-h and Mr. S-t-d,
And their sublime quandary !

“ ‘ Nothing to talk about,’ with tel-
Ephones quite common getting ;
With Tories really ruling well,
And Liberals a-fretting !

“ ‘ Nothing to talk about,’ when one,
Our poet-peer so famous,
Another vol. of verse has done,
With rapture to inflame us !

“ ‘ Nothing to talk about ! ’ Good Lord !
With prices growing dearer ;
With all that cholera abroad,
And ‘ lections drawing nearer !

“ ‘Nothing to talk about!’ No doubt
Your wits are in stagnation.
At least you can discourse about
‘The art of conversation!’

“ ‘Nothing to talk about!’ Oh, fie ;
Come lay your heads together.
If other topics fail ye—why,
Fall back upon the weather !”

ON THE LAWN TENNIS TOURNAMENT AT
EASTBOURNE, SEPTEMBER, 1885.

THE balls fly fast across the net ;
Here Renshaw wins from Grove a “set,”
And Ross plays Lewis there !
Those solemn umpires perched on high
“Fault !” “Fault !” continually cry—
A *faulty* game, I swear !

“*Deuce*” is a very naughty word,
And yet, alas ! ’tis often heard
From manly lips to-day !
Though “*love fifteen*” sounds well, I ween,
I much prefer “Sweet Seventeen,”
When Cupid comes my way !

484 *SKETCHES IN PROSE AND VERSE.*

The Champion's brother plays with grace,
And none a ball can better place,
 None volley half so well !
Whilst Taylor *takes the measure* right
Of each antagonist at sight,
 As half an eye can tell !

Grove is not green, as you'd suppose,
"A thing or two" he surely knows ;
 His play is really fine !
"The cup" from all young Lewis bore,
Long may he see it brimming o'er
 With foaming sparkling wine !

The ladies are in force indeed,
As, "running up" with wondrous speed,
 Their fairy forms they show !
For peeps of pretty little feet
And ankles wonderfully neat
 To-day are "all the go !"

Keen emulation lights their eyes,
"The Victory" they dearly prize,
 And battle to the end !
If ladies at their best we'd see,
The Tennis ground's the place for me !
 The place for you, my friend !

A VOICE IN THE MATTER !

WHAT were Photophones to me ?
Quite a superfluity !
What cared I for Telephone ?
Not a button, I must own !
But my "vocal cords" were rough,
And my voice was passing gruff,
Something like a raven's croak,
Frightened people when I spoke !
When I sang, my friends all fled,
"Having business," so they said.
This continued till I sent
For a silver instrument ;
When my voice of late so hoarse,
Was Italianized of course !
Inhalations, slow and deep
Hushed the raven's croak to sleep,
Sundry chemicals inhaled,
O'er my huskiness prevailed.
Now whene'er I chance to sing,
Friends instanter form a *ring*.
Comes a silence deep as death,
No one dares to draw his breath,
As my notes so full and clear
Fall upon the ravished ear !
"What has come across the man ?
Is he not *I-tal-i-an* ?"
"Nay, my friends,"—I say to them,
'Simply Doctor Carter M. !

He it is, and *he* alone,
 Who has mollified my tone !
 I've my voice in *Harness* so
 I can guide it high or low !
Court a lass—or *slang a sweep*,
 Whisper softly—mutter deep—
 And this blessed change has grown
 Out of the Ammoniaphone ! ”

DINNER IS A STAGE.

DINNER is a stage,
 With knives and forks the company are players ;
 Courses have exits and swift entrances ;
 And each guest, in his time, plays many parts,
 His acts being seven epochs. At first the soup
 Steaming and seething in the grand tureen.
 Then comes the whiting tasty, or the salmon
 With shining silvery scales, sleeping serene
 Upon the lordly dish ; and then the venison,
 Done to a turn, and worthy of a ballad
 As any lady's eyebrow. Then the pasties
 Full of rich fruit, and not too much of lard,
 Jellies, delicious, wholesome, and quickly eaten,
 Melting—a great desideratum—
 Even in the diner's mouth—and then the stilton
 In fair round form, and with a napkin bound,

With rind full thick, and taste extremely strong,
 Full of strange mites, and microscopic things ;
 So each guest plays his part. The sixth course shifts
 Into the rare luxurious desert,
 With sherry on this side, and port on that ;
 A vintage good well saved, a world too old
 To be much drunk ; the host's loud manly voice
 Turning at length quite husky, cherished pipes
 And weeds with coffee come. Last scene of all
 That ends this dinner's faithful history,
 In simple maundering, and sheer oblivion,
 Sans sense, sans eyes, sans speech, sans everything !
 (*Truth Prize Parody.*)

A LAWN TENNIS ODE.

A *courtly* game, so bound to *pleas(e)*,
 If *racketing* be sport,
 Here all our embryo Q.C.'s
 Will find the "*Inns*" of "*Court.*"
A maiden over! Pattie prone !
 Eve's daughters *share the fall*, you'll own.
 Much profit lies in "*quick returns,*"
Net profits, too, are they !
Here some (Lawn) Tennis-son oft earns
 "*The cup,*" but *that* means *play!*
 At *balls* sweet *Charity* doth skip,
 "*Love all!*" is ever on her lip.

ENVOI.

When Love "once" hath them in the *net*,
Deuce take that comely pair ;
 They'll have another "*Service*" yet,
 A "*match* upon "*the Square* !" ¹

AFTER BEING SENT FOR !

(WITH APOLOGIES TO THE SHADE OF E. A. POE.)

[*After his Poem, "For Annie:"*]

THANK Heaven ! The crisis,
 The waiting is past,
 And the stop-gap arrangement
 Is over at last—
 And the idiots called Tories
 Are ousted at last.

Sadly I know
 I've lost some of my flock,
 And Lord Harty has gone,
 Which was rather a shock !
 But no matter ; I feel
 I am firm as a rock—
 And I whistle so cheerily
 Now at my "craft," ²
 That any beholder
 Might fancy me "daft"—
 Might start at beholding me,
 Thinking me daft !

¹ St. George's, Hanover Square.

² Woodcraft.

The craving—the longing—
The passion for place—
With years has grown stronger,
At least, in my case !
And the passion for power
I count no disgrace.

And ah ! Let it never
Be foolishly said
That my perch it is shaky,
And I've lost my head !
For a man was ne'er blest
With so splendid a head,
And to *rule*—you must do it
With just such a head !

My comforted spirit
In clover now cuddles,
Forgetting, or never
Regretting, its muddles—
Its old "agitations,"
And manifold muddles—

For my heart it is lighter
Than all of the many
Hearts in the land,
For I'm higher than any !
It grows with the sense
Of the height of my power,
With the sense of the length
And the breadth of my power !

CHILDREN AT THE PANTOMIME.

(AFTER SOUTHEY.)

It was a winter's evening ;
 The father's work was done,
 And in a box at Drury Lane
 He sat to see the fun,
 And nestling closely at his side
 Were Mat and Mabel eager-eyed.

They gloated over Blue Beard's crimes ;
 They pitied Sister Ann ;
 They clapped the transformation scene,
 As only children can ;
 Then Columbine and Harlequin,
 With Clown and Pantaloon, come in.

"Now tell us what it's all about,"
 Young Mat expectant cries ;
 And little Mabel seconds him
 With shining wistful eyes.
 "Now tell us all about the fuss,
 And why they whack each other thus."

"It is their way," the father said ;
 "They act it in dumb show ;
 But what they whack each other for
 I really do not know.
 But everybody calls it prime—
 It is a famous pantomime.

But still, they say, 'tis sad to see
Those girls so young and fair,
Who charmed you so just now, at home,
And all the squalor there.
But things like these in every clime
Attend a famous panto mime
Great credit has the manager
From all the people gained."
"Why those poor girls *appeared* so gay!"
Quoth Mabel, greatly pained.
"Hush, hush, thou little lass o' mine ;
It is a famous pantomime !
And folk have praised the good lessee,
Who's furnished us the fun."
"But what's the meaning of it all ? "
Quoth Mat, his tiny son.
Said dad, " You'll know it all in time ;
But 'tis a famous pantomime."
(*World Prize Parody.*)

WHEN THE BOYS COME HOME !

A NEW VERSION FOR THE 'XMAS HOLIDAYS.

(*Not* by COL. JOHN HAY.)

I.

THERE'S a noisy time coming
When the boys come home ;
An uproarious day is coming
When the boys come home ;

We shall end, by Fate's fell *fiat*
 This blessed spell of quiet
 In an outburst of riot
 When the boys come home.

II.

The butcher will look brighter
 When the boys come home ;
 Our pockets will be lighter
 When the boys come home ;
 Silly sisters will press them
 To guzzle, and caress them—
I'm not disposed to bless them
 When the boys come home.

III.

The *jams* will swiftly vanish
 When the boys come home,
 And decorum we must banish
 When the boys come home ;
 The vases will be shattered,
 And the furniture be battered,
 And the costly curtains tattered
 When the boys come home.

IV.

Their "suits" may be in creases
 When the boys come home,
 And their boots be all to pieces
 When the boys come home ;

But we shall see the traces
Of Mischief's doubtful graces
In the ruddy, roguish faces
When the boys come home.

V.

The 'bus will go to meet them
When the boys come home,
And I shall have to treat them
When the boys come home ;
Excess of cake and wine, O,
Will mean the Doctor, I know,
And Pater finds the rhino
When the boys come home !

MY FIRST GRAND JURY !

(JUNE 28TH, 1882.)

[*A Reminiscence of Exeter—after Hood.*]

WHEN I was down at fair Torquay
With my devoted dame,
(I am a married man you see !)
The Sheriff's summons came.

II.

I looked upon the awful writ—
It warned me not to fail—
To be and to appear—to wit
At Exon—hence my tale !

III.

My coronet was overdue,
At least I had it here ;
I thank the Sheriff—that I do,
For making me *a-Peer* !

IV.

At home, I took, with radiant brow,
My "Gladstone" from its shelf,
Some juries have been *packed*, but now,
A juror packed *himself* !

V.

We reached the station, caught the train,
A shriek ! and we were gone !
Queen's weather, yet it did not *rain*,
That sultry summer's morn.

VI.

Full soon a weedy-looking lad
Got in—so much the worse ;
He read a poet, so we had
Before us *chap. and verse*.

VII.

A very vulgar clod of clay,
A cub unlicked, I trow,
Or he had never sprawled, you'll say,
Before a lady so.

VIII.

At Dawlish, though, our gent, we dropped,
The air far purer grew,
And when at *Exeter* we stopped,
We made our *exit* too !

IX.

My doctor long had made me *fast*
(The gout was his excuse),
But in my *hostelrie* at last
I might be on the *loose*.

X.

I stepped inside with easy air,
And merry beaming eyes,
The lady of the *bar* was there,
A lady of a *size*

XI.

I did not like her stare at all,
And quailed beneath her glance,
Her tone was redolent of *gall*,
Though she was not from *France* !

XII.

She scanned a volume huge to see,
And then pronounced my doom,
As she disliked my *company*
She quickly chose my *room*.

XIII.

To that I was in silence shown
 By Boots of solemn mien,
 And from that moment I was known
 As "Number Seventeen !

XIV.

Then with my partner did I go
 About the ancient town,
 But soon her time was *up*—and lo !
 Her train was coming *down* !

XV.

Next day at 10 a.m., in glee,
 The Castle old I sought—
 I was ennobled—don't you see ?
 And so I went to "*Court.*"

XVI.

This legal business none could blink,
 It must be done by man ;
 And yet it made me sad to think
Per jury was the plan.

XVII.

We next were sworn in groups of three,
 Then shown a chamber large,
 We all *went off* immediately
 We had received a "*charge.*"

XVIII.

And then to work with puzzled phiz
I set, that summer day,
For when you find a bill, there is
Too oft the deuce to pay !

XIX.

Sometimes the evidence was slight,—
Its total value—nil !
Oh, could I of my tailor write
Those magic words "*No bill.*"

XX.

The county's conduct I condemn,
My peerage I decline,
I helped to settle "bills" for them,
They should have *settled mine* !

—

THE LATE PARLIAMENT, 1886.

(IN MEMORIAM.)

HERE lies a Baby Parliament, cut short
In infancy, from lack of dire *support*.
Measures were tried in vain its life to save,
But in *the Union* it has found a grave ;
It did no good, so feeble and forlorn,
Better for us, if it had not been born !
Its brief existence passed in strife and din,
Death through compassion took the infant in !
Its *members*—many of them—out of gear,
No doctoring could make it live a year,

k k

But it expired, convulsed with dire throes,
 And disagreement twixt its *eyes* and *noes* !
 Although a babe, it ran up Bills, I trow,
 Whose items proved its mental force was low ;
 Its dissolution, though we drop a tear,
 Was a good thing for England—it is clear !

THE COMMON SQUEAL! A SONG FOR THE SLEEPLESS.

(WITH APOLOGIES TO MR. A. C. SWINBURNE.)

WHAT are these that scream and squeal upon the roof
 of this my dwelling ?

Who are they who flood my ears with nightly squall ?
 See the tabby join the horrid band that sets the neigh-
 bours yelling,
 See Grimalkin lord it grimly over all !

Hear the words wherein I sharply rate and exöcrate this
 babel,

“ Ye are they who are disturbers of my peace,
 Till I bring forth my revolver, what is slumber but a
 fable ?

When I use it—then shall hope of sleep increase.

Who would fear to shoot a double-faced, unmusical old
 Tabby,

Harsh of language, lank of limb, and sharp of claw ?
 Night is well-nigh spent,” I cry ; “ you vote me cruel,
 tricky, shabby ?

I am riled, and will not give you any law ! ”

Many a night that caterwauling has continued, I
remember.

On my housetops, and my neighbours' in the town ;
Many a time I've blazed at him—the fell band's grey
and grizzled member,

But unluckily, I've *never* brought him down !!

THE CUTTING OF THE KNOT!

(AFTER BYRON.)

I.

GREAT GLADSTONE came down his new Bill to unfold,
And his cohorts awaited their leader so bold,
And the noise of their cheers was like tars on the sea,
When they're given the toast of old England's Navee !

II.

Like the geese of the farm-yard when summer is green,
The cock-a-hoop Tories at noon-day were seen,
Like the geese of the farm-yard when autumn has
come,
Those Tories at midnight were nerveless and dumb !

III.

For the King of Debate his opponents did blast,
And glared in the face of each foeman aghast,
And the hopes of the Tories waxed presently chill,
And their groans but once rose—then, for ever grew
still !

iv.

And the sturdy Home Rulers are loud in their cheers,
And the faces are blank in the House of the Peers,
And the knot of the hour, uncut by the sword,
Dissolves at the touch of the Cabinet's lord !

TO JOE CHAMBERLAIN !

FROM W. E. G.

(AFTER BURNS.)

i.

JOE CHAMBERLAIN, my ain Joe,
When we were first acquent,
Your heart it was no craven's,
Your brow bespoke content.
But now your brow is black, Joe,
Your heart is sinking low,
Confusion light upon your pow,
Joe Chamberlain, my Joe !

ii.

Joe Chamberlain, my ain Joe,
We've done much ill thegither,
And mony a canting yarn, Joe,
We've had with one anither !
Now, you have struck your flag, Joe
And basely from me go,
No mere thegither shall we sail,
Joe Chamberlain, my Joe !

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